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Or: The Growing Up of Anne Carter

Works of ISLA MAY MULLINS

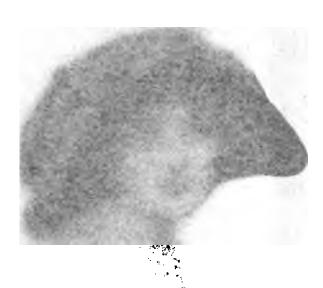
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OR: THE GROWING UP OF ANNE CARTER

. **BY**

ISLA MAY MULLINS

AUTHOR OF "THE BLOSSOM SHOP," ETC.

WITH A PRONTISPIECE IN FULL COLOR BY

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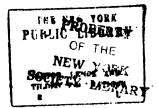
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TO MY HUSBAND

Edgar Boung Mullins

WHOSE UNFAILING INTEREST IN MY WORK
HAS BEEN MY CONSTANT INSPIRATION.



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ANNE OF THE BLOSSOM SHOP

CHAPTER I

A SOUTHERN HOME

THE earth smelled sweet with needed moisture, while foliage dripped with surfeit of refreshment, and falling drops sparkled in the red and gold of sunset, when the quick, almost tropical, spring shower of the far South had passed.

Two little girls of ten and eleven sat on the long veranda facing dripping trees and shrubs. Gene, the little ten-year-old,

with fair curls unusually still, and a wistful look in her deep blue eyes, watched and listened as the shining drops fell with musical touch from tall trees upon slick japonica and cape-jessamine leaves.

"Oh, May," she said, at last, with quick intake of breath, "isn't everything beautiful?"

May, the older of the two, with brown eyes, hair to match and russet cheeks, looked up from the book over which they had been leaning, and, trying not to be unresponsive, said slowly, "Yes."

Gene, noting the lack of heartiness, laughed. "Oh, but you never did not see, like me! If you had just been seeing out of your eyes one year, almost, you would know as I do how pretty raindrops are."

Then she chanted gaily:

- "'A drop fell on the apple-tree, Another on the roof; A half'a dozen kissed the eaves And made the gables laugh.
- "'A few went out to help the brook, The birds jocoser sung; The sunshine threw his hat away, The orchards spangles hung.'

"Mother and I used to always say that when there was a shower," she laughed. "We learned so much pretty poetry, because I loved to say it over to myself when I couldn't see to read. It was mostly Emily Dickinson's though, for I loved her best of all."

Then, with a quaint thoughtfulness, she went on, "I think one reason rain drops are prettier to me now than to any one else, is because, when I couldn't see, I used to love so to listen to them, — and now they are pretty, just like they used to be in the listening to their drip, drop,

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— and pretty to see with my eyes besides."

May looked at her a little wonderingly, for the delicate subtleties of a child once blind were a bit beyond her. The two loved one another, though, and Gene, after a moment, said with sudden earnestness:

"May, if I tell you something, will you promise never to tell mother, — it would worry her, I know."

"Yes," returned May, with prompt and eager desire for anything "secret."

Gene waited an impressive moment, and then she whispered:

"I don't feel bad a bit about all the years I was blind, — from the time I was born till the New York doctor took the little covers from my eyes, except for one thing, — I never did see my own dear father." There was a quiver of the little

lips as the child finished, and the whisper was very faint at the end.

May looked startled a minute, then thoughtful in turn.

"I never did see my own dear mother either, — or if I did, I was so little it didn't do me any good!" she exclaimed triumphantly.

Gene was surprised in her turn, for she had never thought of that before, and then she threw her arms about May, being the more demonstrative of the two, and whispered again, but in happy triumph this time:

"But I'm so glad I've got your father for my father, and I can see him every day,—and I do love him."

The enthusiasm being contagious, May responded happily, "And I'm so glad I've got your mother for my mother, for I just love her."

In the pensive atmosphere of a shower, which is always propitious for reminiscence, the little girls' reflections went on.

"Isn't it funny how much difference a year has made for us," said Gene with childish ingenuousness, "you and Anne have a mother when you didn't have any then, and I have a father when I didn't have any then; mother is Mrs. Carter now, when she used to be Mrs. Grey, I am Gene Carter Grey, you know," she laughed, "so as to be really, truly in the family, when I used to be just Gene Grey, and Anne is Anne instead of being 'Hannie' like she used to be." And the two laughed merrily as the family transformations were thus summed up.

"Father and I are the only ones who haven't had any changes made in our names," next reflected May, "but," she went on with sisterly frankness and a

child's touch of scorn, "Anne wanted to be called by her right name instead of my baby nickname for her, Hannie, because she was going to be so dignified and precise, but I don't think it will ever fit her if that is what it stands for."

Gene was not prepared to gainsay this opinion, and returning to her happy summing up of the situation, she exclaimed:

"Anyhow, I think your father and my mother were so good to get married and give you and Anne mother, and me father."

Although the marriage which had supplied missing parents to the three little girls of ten, eleven and thirteen, had taken place almost a year before, there had never been such clear expression concerning its mutual benefit aspects.

Wholly unconscious of these felicita-

tions and momentous conclusions, Mr. Carter leaned his tall form against one of the big round pillars that reached from the veranda floor up past two stories to the roof of the square, old-time southern home, while his wife sat near in a low porch rocker bending over some light work, with soft brown tendrils playing over the warm color of her sweet face in a lingering breeze the shower had brought. Suddenly she looked up at him with bright, smiling understanding as impetuous steps came down the long flight of stairs in the broad hall within, and Anne, the eldest of the three girls, rushed out.

She stood before them a moment letting indignant, chagrined, grey-blue eyes at their widest and a bedraggled, dripping, blotched mass of straw, flowers and ribbon, — forlorn remains of a new spring hat, — tell the tale of unmitigated woe.

"Why, Anne, dear," said Mrs. Carter gently, "how did it happen?"

"I just forgot to look after my windows when the shower came up — and my new hat was right on the window-sill," the girl confessed tragically.

Mr. and Mrs. Carter exchanged glances and could hardly keep the laughter back.

May and Gene had come up by this time with dismayed exclamations, and, turning to them, Anne said, with a hint of resentment flaring up:

"Gene Carter Grey, where was your best hat when that shower came up, or down,—your windows open just as mine do."

Gene smiled almost guiltily and faltered, "Oh, Anne, you know."

Anne of the Blossom Shop

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And Anne did know. It was always in its proper place. Then the older girl's warm-hearted, generous nature reasserted itself. She ran to Gene and hugged the child warmly.

"You mean old perfect thing," she laughed, "you don't make any fuss growing up!"

Anne had thrown the hat down for this performance, and Mrs. Carter said pleasantly:

"Bring it here, dear, and we will see what can be done with it."

Anne's eyes were wider than ever as she slowly obeyed, saying: "Why, nothing can be done with it, mother; I'll have to have another new one."

"There will not be another hat this season," said her father, his lean, kind face taking on the positive lines of which it was capable.

There was appeal in the mother's eyes, for she wished he had not made the edict so final, but she veiled them and said hopefully:

"Put it away for the present, Anne, dear, and to-morrow we will see what can be done. I have magic fingers, you know sometimes you say, and I will help you."

Anne realized resignedly that this was a part of the training which had begun for her almost a year before, — and which her good sense told her was what she needed sorely, so she went obediently and put the hat away, then came bounding out again and challenged the other girls with a gay, "I'll beat you to the 'Blossom Shop!'" for a run in the rainwashed air.

May and Gene responded with a flash of slippered feet from the low veranda floor to the broad graveled walk, and the three girls went flying across the wide lawn with its trees and shrubs, through the orchard of peach and pear trees in pink and white, on, on to the "Blossom Shop."

This was a picturesque, low building of East Indian architecture, whose sloping roof dropped from its high apex in deep, graceful curves to cover generously the broad veranda all around its sides, with an upward tilt of the roof again at the quaint pillars. It stood on the site of the old home of Gene Grey and her mother, which had burned down the year before, leaving them broken-hearted and desolate, and taking away their means of livelihood. After the death of Mrs. Grey's parents and husband, she and her little blind daughter were left almost penniless, but with the help of

Uncle Sam, an old colored servant of the family, they had earned a livelihood in the old home by making use of the long rows of cape-jessamines which adorned the place, packing and shipping them to Northern markets, and turning the home into what they lovingly called "The Blossom Shop." This fire which burned their home, also destroyed the capejessamines, - but, like a crucible, which was meant only to reveal better things, it was the means of bringing to light the will of Mr. Grey's New England parents, which left his wife and little daughter a large fortune. Miss Martha Grey, a maiden aunt of Eugene Grey (the father of little Gene, for whom she was named), took the Southern widow and little blind daughter into her narrow, restrained heart in spite of strong previous prejudice, when they went North to would, ere long, cover the exterior with beauty and fragrance. The house consisted simply of one big room with lavatory at the back, occupying one corner of the rear veranda, and, besides being picturesque and attractive, was admirably adapted as a "shop" and playhouse for the children. Here they and their mother before it was finished had packed Southern smilax at Christmas time to send to the Northern hospitals for children, and here, very soon, they would be packing cape-jessamines for the same destination. No money would come back in exchange for Southern flowers and vines, as in the old days, but the joy of the Blossom Shop business would be greater than ever, and when a sanitarium for blind children (which Aunt Martha and little Gene had planned together) should be ready, it would be the greatest happiness of all to send the smilax and jessamine there.

Dr. Murton, Aunt Martha's family physician, a big-hearted, jolly bachelor of sixty, who was to have charge of the Sanitarium, and who had grown very fond of Gene, her mother and the Carters on their visit to the North the previous year, had also made a trip from Massachusetts to Alabama to see if that new "Shop" was going up right; and his suggestion was for a tennis court and croquet grounds in the rear of the "Shop," where the barn and out-buildings of the old Grey house had stood. "For," as he put it, "if these children are going to carry on the real blossom business of making the world sweeter and better, they must have strong bodies. The outdoor life, your Southern horseback riding, and walking are all right, but there

must be open-air exercise that will make your muscles good, and tennis will do it."

So a beautiful tennis court and croquet grounds in the rear were the result. Money was not spared in all these arrangements, for the place was little Gene's, and there was no thought of expense where her welfare was considered, though her mother was firm in her determination that the child should be reared without a sense of personal wealth. Aunt Martha agreed heartily to this, saying: "I was brought up with the thought of money ever before me. We must 'Save, save, in order to have something,' — then we must strive to keep it; then exclusiveness came in to cramp my life, and I never knew freedom until I knew you Southern folks," she laughed.

Anne, May and Gene, after their race, sauntered about among the rows of young

cape-jessamines in front of the shop, which had been replanted wherever necessary, though many plants had sprung up again from their uninjured roots.

"Oh, they're budding!" cried Gene, the first to discover, by touch and sight, the new buds in their strong, green, waxlike petal covers.

"We'll be packing them before we know it," responded Anne enthusiastically, and then they went inside to talk over for the thousandth time happy Blossom Shop plans. It seemed to them the loveliest place in all the world, and was, as yet, almost a fairy tale.

When the children were gone, Mr. Carter said to his wife, "I am afraid Anne tries you sorely with her heedlessness." He was not often a witness to the girl's many lapses, so the ruined hat impressed him disproportionately, perhaps.

But Mrs. Carter shook her head emphatically. "No, Anne's warm heart atones for anything I have ever yet seen in her. If it were not for that, Gene's inborn New England orderliness would be a constant source of unhappiness to all three children."

"Well, the child is pretty nearly perfect, — as Anne says, — 'mean old perfect thing!'" and he laughed at the recollection of the girl's putting of it, "but why shouldn't she be, with the best of the North and the best of the South flowing in her veins?" And he smiled affectionately at his wife.

"In her personal habits she is all New England, I freely admit," Mrs. Carter replied; then, laughing softly in quick recollection, she said, "It was positively funny how she fitted into the prim orderliness, the immaculateness of her Aunt Martha's New England home when we were there last year, — and, you know, that was before the child could see, too, — she didn't have to see it, she felt it, and promptly 'found herself' for the first time," ending with the merry, youthful laugh that made her so dear to all the children.

Sobering again, she went on, "But, if it were not for the true nobility in Anne and May, which does not harbor such ugly traits as jealousy, envy and animosity, I do not know just how things might go."

"If there were not such a wise little woman at the helm, the breakers might prove too much for our craft, I say," Mr. Carter returned warmly, brushing her cheek gently with his fingers as he walked into the house.

Mrs. Carter soon followed him and in

the hall encountered Mammy Sue, the colored servant who had mothered the two Carter girls from the time of May's birth. She saw at once that Mammy knew of Anne's mishap, for tragedy was written on the faithful old black face.

"Miss Alice," she began with firmness, "them chillun cain't get along 'thout me to teek kere o' their things. I know you an' Marse John thinks they got ter be dis'plined, but I know they needs me. Ef I'd been looking atter their things,"—"like I oughter been," she wanted to say but didn't quite dare,—"dat new hat er Miss Anne's wouldn't nuver got no rain on hit."

"Yes, I know, Mammy," said Mrs. Carter kindly, "but she will not have you always, nor me, nor any one to take care of her things, perhaps, and you know youth is the time to learn, so you and I

must suffer and withhold if we make our children what they should be."

The old darkey could not follow all this with full intelligence, but the kindness of the tone and the "we" won her, and setting her lips together, she walked back to the kitchen, wiping her eyes furtively as she went.

Mammy Sue was the fourth corner to the all-square problem which Mrs. Carter had taken up a year before when she renounced and turned over to her little daughter, Gene, the large fortune in order to marry Mr. Carter, the man of her choice, and to mother his two little girls.

CHAPTER II

ANNE'S GROWING UP

THE next morning was Saturday, and the ruined hat must have attention, the day following being Sunday. But it was, moreover, the day when the three girls must spend as long a time in the big sewing-room at the end of the hall on the second floor as was necessary to put their clothing in order, — sewing on missing or loosened buttons, mending unfortunate rips and tears, and darning stockings.

When Anne brought the bedraggled hat into the work-room there was a decided look of discontent upon her young face, combined with a listlessness of manner that boded no great success in the undertaking. With the usual possibilities of the bubbling-over, happy temperament, she was capable of dropping, at times, to shadowy depths.

Polly, the pet parrot, hanging high in her cage as she always did when they were at work, had a very discerning eye and promptly cried, "Bad Anne," which put May and Gene in a giggle, and gave Anne opportunity to vent some of her discontent in an indignant, "Now, Polly Carter, you keep still!"

And Polly had the audacity to laugh loudly, whereupon Anne ran across the room, caught up a big sewing-apron, threw it over the cage and tied it down tightly underneath. Then the laughter turned to a tragic crying on Polly's part, which was accepted as full apology, and Anne released her with a commanding, "Now, see that you behave yourself!"

Discontent somewhat expended, only deep dejection remained when Mrs. Carter came in to start their tasks, as she always did. This time she meant to stay until Anne's hat was rehabilitated. Seating herself at the big work-table, she asked the girl to bring it that they might look it over. This done, she exclaimed brightly:

"Well, the rain certainly did its best, but it had no idea how smart we are going to be! Get the scissors, please, and rip everything off, while I am starting May and Gene with their work."

Anne did as she was bid, but with no increase of courage.

"Now," said Mrs. Carter when it was done, "let me see."

She examined it carefully again.

"Well, this is not so bad. The splotches are all on the side where the flowers go. We will press the ribbon, — Mammy will show you how, — and then I know a trick to do to the flowers."

This was too much for Anne. "Oh, mother," she said pleadingly, "please don't say I ought to use those faded things again!"

Mrs. Carter put out her hand, smiled lovingly and said, "Trust mother."

Warm-hearted Anne stooped at once and kissed her. "Poor mother, dear," she said, sighing deeply, "you do have such hard work helping me to grow up!" Then she flew down-stairs, hope fully reinstated. When she returned, Mrs. Carter had out her water colors and brushes and had already tinted one of the colorless poppies that had once adorned the hat.

"Oh, mother, darling mother," exclaimed the girl enthusiastically, "it is beautiful!" And when Mrs. Carter showed her how to do the tinting Anne's delight was unbounded.

During the trimming, Mrs. Carter sat by, directing constantly, giving a skillful touch here and there, till, when finished, it really showed little evidence of storm experience, and the owner was prouder of it than she had ever been. Mrs. Carter knew it would not meet future vicissitudes with its pristine resistance, but a lesson of resourcefulness had been learned, and, she hoped, one of thoughtfulness in the care of belongings, — but that remained to be seen.

When Mrs. Carter had taken her complex trio in hand the year before, she found "Hannie," as she was then called, and May two lovable girls who had gone their own way from babyhood, like two bright-colored butterflies, touching only sweets.

There must be a new regime if they were ever to learn happy, busy, house-wifely ways which she thought essential for all-round womanhood.

She soon called the young trio to her, and they fell at her feet with elbows digging her knees and eager faces looking up into hers. She always had interesting things to tell them. This time a serious look drew soft shadows to her lovely eyes as they waited.

"I want to make some new plans with my girlies three, — my big-sized girl, my middle-sized girl and my wee, wee girl. Do they all agree?"

"Yes, yes, mother," they cried in chorus.

"Well," she began brightly, "I want

to talk to you about making our home the loveliest home in all the world, and how each of us must have a part in it. You see, we have labeled our place 'The Blossom Shop,' and while the external part is over in our new, beautiful building, the real blossoms that will perpetuate its bloom and fragrance must be unfolding and developing here. We must grow strong and wise and beautiful here all the time, if we are going to make that shop flourish."

They listened attentively, and she went on in a sprightly way that made even earnestness charming in her.

"I always love to have big reasons for doing even small things, and there is a truly big reason back of all the little things we must try to do, — for we are part of a great, big universe!"

"What is it, mother?" asked Gene

eagerly, for she knew better than the others what lovely things mother could think of.

"God made a beautiful, harmonious world, and we, — human beings, — are the only perfectly *free* creatures he put into it. We can, if we choose, fall in with its sweet harmonies, or we can, all through life, be antagonistic to everything, — including the Heavenly Father Himself.

"Now, I know without asking, that my three want to fall in with life's harmonies."

And three smiling faces confirmed her.

"Then you must listen for the keynotes of the great musical strains which flow together in one mighty chorus, if you want to catch the rhythm of the universe. The first key-note is order. Watch sun and moon, planet and star

how they march through space in such unvarying order that it can be calculated to the least fraction of a second just what they will be doing each day that comes. The key-note of the rhythmical movement of the world is order. And from this great big fact we get our lesson for orderliness in our homes, and each small girl in the universe can think, as she does her little daily tasks promptly and well, that she is keeping time with the wonderful, moving, shining globes above, — the sun, the moon and the stars." And her words fell into a rhythmical swing as she smiled into three pairs of upturned eyes that were big with interest.

"The key-note of the next great strain of universal harmony is beauty, — and we look at trees and shrubs and flowers. How perfect in form is each wee leaf unfurled, how clean and lovely each opening bud, how infinite in variety as they spring into leaf and blossom the world over, — like millions and millions of soft bells in millions and millions of tones, fitting form and color and fragrance into the wonderful harmony of the universe. And, coming back to us, we learn from them that we must make ourselves and our surroundings as beautiful as possible, with all the cleverness and ingenuity we have, if we would blend into this manytoned, exquisite medley of beauty which flows into the great harmonious whole.

"Third and last of the three great rhythmical strains is content, it seems to me. And we turn to beasts, birds and insects. They haven't our privilege of choice, and yet with peculiar, instinctive adaptability to this world of harmonies, they make us wonder if, after all, they are not conscious of the Infinite." That was a little digression in her thought, but she straightway returned to the main subject in hand.

"And here we get our lesson of content. Beast and bird and insect are content, — accept their place and form and work, patiently endure, carefully fulfill their life-purpose. Man is the only living thing that grumbles about his place in life, how he looks, or what he has to do, — and yet to him alone is given the high privilege of fashioning his life as he will, with the possibility of making it finally reflect God himself throughout eternal ages." There was silence for a moment as she finished, and then —

"My, isn't that a sermon," she laughed, releasing the tension which had held her listeners, "but, you see, I began with big things, came down to little things, — the

concerns of three small girls, and that took me right up to the big things again, for each girl and boy was truly born with the possibility of reflecting God's glory through eternity,— as little as we sometimes think about it when we try to help them grow up orderly, beautiful and content."

"Oh, mother, can we ever fit into the big world like that?" sighed Anne.

"Why, I am sure we can," returned Mrs. Carter, "and make our home the most beautiful in the world, as I said in the beginning, — if my big-sized girl, my middle-sized girl and my wee, wee girl each does her part like the tiniest star, the smallest violet and the weeest humming bee. Now, we will plan just how to go to work. Each girl must have a room of her own for which she must care each day."

- "You mean 'clean up?'" asked Anne, wide-eyed.
 - "Yes," returned Mrs. Carter, smiling.
- "Why, Mammy Sue always does that!" put in May.
- "Yes, I know, but we are going to learn now, as we should, how to fit into a busy, beautiful world. So each girl is to do things herself, take care of her room and of her young body each day, making herself look as sweet and clean and fresh as the flowers each morning after their bath of dew."
- "Mother, mother," cried Anne, "I never can comb my hair in the world. Mammy Sue says so! I tried once when she was sick, and everybody said I looked a perfect fright!"

Mrs. Carter laughed. "I don't doubt it. But, you know, we can learn, like every little living thing, to do our daily

tasks if we try." Then hurrying on, in spite of dubious looks, "And each small girl will take care of her clothes and belongings, putting away each day those not in use, and mending and darning everything as there is need."

Here was cause for consternation indeed.

"Why, Mammy Sue always does that," faltered Anne again. And, "I know she wants to," said May hopefully.

Had they ever glimpsed the stars, the flowers or the busy humming bee at all?

Mrs. Carter had a keen sense of humor and laughed outright merrily. "I don't doubt that in the least," she said, "but Mammy Sue is going to be proud when she sees how well you can do things. She simply did not know how to teach you, and so she did things for you."

Gene had listened to it all with shining

eyes. She loved to "do things," and it delighted her small soul, which was inherently poetic, to hear of great world harmonies and to feel that in her small round of duties she was catching a wonderful universal rhythm, — with the peculiar response which some children make to the spiritual if brought within their grasp.

As for Anne and May, the other-worldness within them, which is latent in all children, had been stirred, and they longed to do as mother wished, but even in the thought of it, though the spirit was willing, after the manner of older folks, the flesh was weak.

Anne lingered soberly after May and Gene had gone. Watching Mammy Sue in the processes of cleaning up, mending and darning, they had not seemed a bit interesting, and things lacking interest were undesirable things to her. She said at last pensively, "Well, if I'm to clean up, mend and darn, I guess you'd all better begin to call me Anne. Maybe that will keep me reminded that I must be old and industrious."

"Why, how lovely that will be!" cried Mrs. Carter. "Anne is a beautiful name to me; if I had it I would certainly want to be called by it."

The girl looked up in quick surprise. She had never dreamed anybody could think Anne a beautiful name.

Mrs. Carter smiled more convincingly: "Why, it is the name of queens! Good Queen Anne did some wonderful shaping of English history, and the beautiful Queen Anne furniture, with mahogany used for the first time and turned into stately highboys, four-poster beds, quaint chairs and tables, with the lovely Chip-

pendale things which have delighted artistic house-wives through the centuries since,—all these came from her reign. Who wouldn't want to be named Annel" she ended enthusiastically, and the girl's eyes sparkled in response.

"Nobody ever told me about it before," she said, "I believe I am going to like it." And Mrs. Carter caught this up with a soft, "It was your own dear mother's name, too."

A startled look crept into the girl's wonder-wide eyes before this hitherto unimpressive fact, and she faltered at last, "Yes, I know."

Both were silent a moment, while the girl's thinking ran along fresh, sweet paths, and then she turned with warmhearted impulsiveness and said, "I am just beginning to know what 'mother' means."

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It was the most precious return Mrs. Carter had yet received from the new children of her heart.

Later Anne had announced to May and Gene, "I am going to be called Anne hereafter, — for I'm going to be very dignified and proper and a whole lot of things from now on."

The two girls laughed back, "Yes, we know you are," and began promptly calling her so, — especially when she failed most noticeably in the new role.

As for her father, he said at once, when told about it, "I shall be very glad indeed to have you called by your own and your mother's name. May's baby, 'Hannie,' putting on the 'H' in sudden return to the ways of our English ancestors, I suppose, was catchy, and before I knew it we were all calling you 'Hannie.' The three names Anne, Anna and Hannah are

all from the same Hebrew derivitive, I believe, but Anne would certainly be my preference," he ended quietly. And this decided the matter positively for the girl. So, with family unanimity, the change was made with almost no lapses.

But not so with the transformation in the habits of Mrs. Carter's new charges,—in spite of a really enthusiastic beginning which she was able to bring about when each of the three girls was provided with carpet-sweeper, dust-pan and a brand new broom with a dozen dust-cloths each. In fact they became so gay over their possessions that they listened eagerly to instructions, and then as Mrs. Carter called them mornings with a light knock at each door and a cheery:

[&]quot;It's time to smooth the hair And get the dimples ready,"

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they went to the new, daily tasks with enthusiasm. She must do this herself at first, for there was no enthusiasm with Mammy Sue. She had openly sniffed, indeed, when the scheme was made known to her, but Mrs. Carter coughed at the same moment, and the sniff was lost.

"Miss Alice," the old woman had said respectfully then, but firmly, "I don't think my chillun's mother ever 'spected 'em to dress themselves and do dere own cleanin' up, an' mendin' an' darnin', — not while I was livin' leastways," her plump figure drawn to its highest and her motherly face stamped with a dignity that would have been funny had it not been pitiful.

"Mammy, I really think you are mistaken about that, for you know the children's mother was a very bright woman," Mrs. Carter had returned.

Mammy agreed to that for "hadn't she nussed her an' he'ped brung her up wid dese very hands?" and the tenseness relaxed while motherliness overcame the strange dignity in the dusky old face.

"So," Mrs. Carter went on, "she would be the first to see that the old times in the South have passed away and our children must learn to do things, little and big, if they are going to make efficient men and women."

The word efficient helped the cause wonderfully. Mammy didn't know what it meant, so it must be something extra fine, and, of course, her "chillun" must have it, even if it broke her old heart,—and Miss Alice did know about things, for sure. So she turned meekly away, trying to find work to do about the house,—less interesting than doing for her "chillun," but that would keep her

busy, and busy the faithful woman must be.

This was but one of many skirmishes between Mrs. Carter and Mammy. Mr. Carter indeed had thought from the first that Mammy Sue would have to be sent away in order to train his children with any success, but Mrs. Carter would not hear of it.

"Why, it would break Mammy's heart," she said, "and mine as well to see her go."

Enthusiasm notwithstanding, Anne more or less tragically struggled with that new regime when it was first inaugurated, and, for that matter, for many months after the initial period.

She hadn't an orderly impulse in her strong young body. It seemed at first almost a hopeless battle for her, the effort to learn to care for her person or her

Mammy Sue had always waged energetic war with the unruly light brown locks, the task being doubly hard while the restless girl danced and sung. The dancing and singing, of course, must still go on while she made her toilet alone, and it was the locks that suffered, for looking in a mirror had never appealed to Anne. So, with hasty strokes of the brush and a vigorous tie-back of the hair from her eyes, she had made her appearance the first morning under the new regime, to wonder blankly why Mammy Sue, whom she passed in the hall, threw an apron over her head and rocked and moaned, why father looked at her reproachfully when she seated herself at the table, May and Gene giggled and wanted to know what made her look "so funny," and mother seemed not to see her at all.

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She did improve in time, however, on this initial effort of the day with her hair; but after that, as the day went on, and there was little or no further recourse to the mirror, hair dressing did not rapidly become the girl's specialty, in spite of gentle admonitions.

Mrs. Carter secretly comforted her father with a laughing:

"Oh, she will come to it in time. Masculinity has not yet reached her horizon. When it does, we will have no trouble about the mirror."

Then her clothes! It actually seemed to Anne they must have a way of getting out of the wardrobe and closets and piling up on the bed, — and floor.

"My things have wings," she complained.

Her hats, after mysterious flight, were

apt to light just anywhere, and somebody was always saying:

"Anne, here is your hat!"

For herself she didn't care a bit about all this, but it seemed to bother other people, and they bothered her!

May had better success with her personal appearance, for she loved to see her hair in order, and when Mammy Sue no longer made it so, she was willing to do it herself, for her own satisfaction. She also loved an orderly room, but she did not want to do the necessary work. She loved to dream and read, and though she tried to do as father and mother wanted her to, she hated it at the same time, and was not, at first much more of a success than her sister. It was only to Gene that personal neatness and orderliness of belongings was, like breathing, instinctive.

As for the "cleaning up," that began

Mammy Sue, in great mortification, soon appeared at her door, while May and Gene stood by laughing.

- "What's all dis fuss 'bout?"
- "Why, it's me growing up, Mammy Sue!" cried Anne gaily, beginning the use of a phrase which was to be much heard.
- "Well, can't yer be quiet 'bout it?" said the privileged old woman, rebukingly.
- "No, indeed, I can't," the girl laughed as she whirled. "May and Gene can, you wouldn't know they are growing this morning, but I can't do it quietly, there's too much inside of me." And the grey-blue eyes sparkled with mischief.

"I'm 'bleeged to say, Miss Anne, den, dat I'se 'shamed of yer," said the old woman, going off with dignity.

Mrs. Carter had not failed to hear the hilarious proceedings, but she felt that rebuke would follow along inevitable lines. And she was right.

Anne's uplifted palm soon grew weary of the broom's weight, and the rebellious missile swept the mantel with a crash, demolishing every dainty ornament upon it.

Deep repentance and deeper lament over the bareness of the mantel followed, but did not replace the shattered trinkets. Nobody seemed to heed the appeal.

The gliding carpet-sweeper a few days later, caught the girl's eye as she pushed it back and forth. Why, it was as good as roller-skates! And, with a tremendous shove, she landed deftly upon its back

with her two solid feet and across the room she sped into the dust-pan and broom, and crash against the wall.

She surveyed the result with wide eyes. Everything was unexpected to her in life; she never foresaw events. The wheels of the sweeper stubbornly refused to turn against the battered top after this, the broom handle was rent in twain and the dust-pan was bent double.

When the wrecks were sorrowfully presented for Mrs. Carter's inspection, that lady cheerfully said that Uncle Sam would take the sweeper to the tinner, who would release the wheels, and that Anne herself could put the two parts of the broom handle together with pasteboard, wrap it well with bandage and make it strong once more, while the dust-pan, she felt sure, the girl's strong hands could also straighten.

Anne meekly did as she was bidden, for the high spirits had fallen to low ebb, and next morning when she took her working outfit from beside May and Gene's, still brave with shining newness, there was a pathetic lament:

"Everything I've got is crippled!"

As for her dozen dust-cloths, there was a constant game of hide and seek with them, with the hiding by far the most successful part of it.

It was about this time that one of Anne's teachers handed Mrs. Carter a study in composition written at the class hour with "the thing each girl was most interested in" for a topic. The subject Anne had chosen was, "The Growing Up of Girls."

"I think you ought to see it," smiled the teacher, "there is comfort in it for both of us, — and some other things." This was the bit of an essay:

"THE GROWING UP OF GIRLS

"It may not be so bad for boys, — and I don't think it is, — but for girls it is dreadful! They have to learn so many things that boys don't, — all about cleaning up and darning and sewing and housekeeping that boys never have to even think about. It just gets done, that's all they know. Then you have to take care of your things — keep them in the right place, I mean, (this is awful!).

"Then girls have to be lady-like, and oh, dear, it's mighty near jail-like sometimes. You mustn't talk too loud or be boisterous—and boys are just expected to stomp around and screech! You have to remember to be 'nice' till sometimes you wish you were a baby or already grown up. You have to stay in days when everything outdoors is just pulling you, — the air, the sunshine, the grass, the trees, the birds and flowers, — and half of you is outside while the other half is staying in!

"And then the books that have to be studied or read, if you ever know anything! There are such stacks of them piled up before you that you just want to shut your eyes and not read any of them. And when you do shut your eyes there are such lovely things to dream about you don't care to open them ever. Then there is practicing to be done when you want to be doing other things, and you just have to tie yourself to the piano stool to stay there, and your fingers just ache till they nearly drop off, — I believe mine are going to sometime. Nobody sees the strings you tie yourself to the stool with, because they are inside of you, but they

hurt worse than those you could see. You have to tie yourself down too, while you draw when your hands are tired and sticky and the houses and trees are all in a muss.

"But if ever people let you forget that you ought to grow up properly (though they don't often do it), and you forget it yourself, there is a heap of fun in being a girl. (I could write all day telling about it, if anybody wants me to.)

"But, after all, when you think everything over, how you will be trailing around in long dresses some day and know it all, you feel like you just want to keep on trying, — and that's what I am going to do.

"Some girls seem to grow up awful easy, but others (like me) are a terror! If it weren't for mothers and teachers, though, nobody could ever do it!"

When Mr. and Mrs. Carter read it they laughed together, — but with fresh understanding of the girl's struggles.

Small wonder though that Mammy Sue was almost wild over "her chillun" at this period, and Uncle Sam, her long-suffering husband, who had held little Gene in his arms as a baby, and to whom she was the dearest thing on earth, learned strenuous new lessons in patience, though life had seemed to have done much along this line for him already. Mammy Sue's good principles would not allow her to disparage Gene, but they did not interfere in the least with venting her spite on Uncle Sam, who stood for the little girl in her subconscious mind.

"What ye leavin' ye things round in my way for?" she would scold at such times, as soon, perhaps, as he had removed a garment from his rheumatic body, and before he had had time to lay it anywhere. "You pertend to be so perticaler," she would go on scornfully, "an' ye don't know nothin' 'bout bein' ordersome! Not the fust thing! Ef you'd er been brung up by my white folks, ye'd know more'n you do now!"

Uncle Sam's eye would flash at this, and then he would remember how perfect his child was, and smile, while he silently commiserated Sue over her "keerless chillun,"— for he knew better than to give expression to any such sentiments. When things got too warm for him in the cabin, which they occupied together since the new regime was inaugurated with the children, which forbade Mammy Sue's sleeping longer on the floor in the room with either Anne or May, he would walk out in the early morning, the hot noonday, or the quiet

night, and come back to find Mammy limp, spent and moaning, to comfort her, after the manner of husbands and wives of greater opportunities.

But things had gradually fallen into smoother grooves in the little Southern household under the spell of two very potent qualities which Mrs. Carter possessed, poise and charm, though Anne was destined still to struggle, many times audibly, in her "growing up."

CHAPTER III

DONALD

WITH the Saturday morning tasks done, Saturday afternoon was always a time for keenest delight. The girls played croquet or tennis with friends, or at particularly delightful seasons, like spring, they went to the woods on old King and Queen, the two big, black carriage mules of the Carters which had been Anne and May's playfellows all their lives. They were held as babies by Mammy Sue on the gentle creatures for long morning rambles through the woods, and later tugged at the reins with their

own small hands as they rode astride the broad backs for independent trips. With the exhilaration of that restored hat upon her, Anne could think of nothing so fitting for this Saturday afternoon as a ride in the country with Uncle Sam to chaperon them.

"Oh, mother, may we take King and Queen and Uncle Sam to the river this afternoon?"

May and Gene took up the plea with, "Oh, please let us!" and there was instant smiling consent, for Mrs. Carter never had more perfect rest about the girls than when they were off with Uncle Sam.

Dinner over, they ran out for him, and his wrinkled black face, with its encircling fringe of snow white beard and hair, beamed instant consent. He was soon mounted on old King with Gene in his tender arms, while Anne held the reins for old Queen with May behind her. As they rode out of the rear yard, a small coal-black darky sat on the steps of an out-house and rolled her eyes around to show the white startlingly, drew her mouth down and swayed her head, full of tightly wrapped knobs of hair, in a way that convulsed the girls.

It was the first time they had seen her, and, "Oh, you funny thing!" they exclaimed, but Uncle Sam drew rein on old King with great displeasure.

"You go long dar, Cahaby, an' behabe yerself! We don't want none er yore sass."

And a pair of rusty, flying heels gave back the only response.

"Uncle Sam, why didn't you let her alone, she is so funny," protested Anne, as they turned into the driveway.

"You don't want nothin' to do wid cornfield niggers," returned Uncle Sam in righteous indignation. "I sart'inly is sorry Mis' Alice had ter git dat gal's mammy heah ter do der cookin', but town niggers shorely ain' no 'count now, an' she 'bleeged to git in a cornfield han',—an' Mandy am a born'd gengious at cookin', fer a fac'."

"What did her mother call her Cahaba for?" asked Gene.

"Why, she was jes' bornd right down here on de Cahaby River, whar' we gwine, an' dey didn't know nothin' else ter name her," he said scornfully.

The girls laughed merrily, and, despite Uncle Sam's displeasure, looked forward to future fun with the small "cornfield nigger," which was destined to be realized.

The little party followed the main

highway of the town a short distance as it turned down to the railroad station, and then continued to the left on the sandy road which led to the river.

They noted every new spring flower on their way and greeted it gaily.

The tall grass was a luxuriant green in the fence corners and May said, "What is your poetry about the grass, Gene?"

Promptly came Gene's response, in scraps of a little poem:

- "The grass so little has to do,—...
 With only butterflies to brood,
 And bees to entertain,
- ""And stir all day to pretty tunes
 The breezes fetch along,
 And hold the sunshine in its lap,—""

Here she laughed in gay appreciation of the quaint figure, then chanted on:

- "And thread the dews all night, like pearls,
 And make itself so fine..."
- "Gene Grey, I believe you know a poem for everything!" exclaimed Anne.
- "For everything outdoors anyway," returned May, who knew more of Gene's poetical store than did her sister.
- "Oh, there's a last sweet-shrub!" cried Anne, and the three were off the mules in a twinkling, plunging in the depths of a way-side thicket to find a chance rose-like blossom with its stiff brown petals and peculiar, spicy fragrance, for their blooming season was really past.
- "I see a big bush over there, which may have some left on it," again cried Anne, and the next moment she was scrambling over a zig-zag rail fence

[&]quot;'And bow to everything;

while "rip" went a projecting splinter through a breadth of her pretty pink chambray skirt.

"Oh, oh," was the dismayed cry over the, to her, always unexpected catastrophe.

Then, as she surveyed the dimensions of the long three-cornered rent, she cried tragically:

"Now, that means at least four thousand times sticking a needle in and pulling it out, ten wounded fingers, two hours of perspiration, three million sighs and a billion heartaches!"

The other girls laughed merrily, and Anne could not long lament, for the present was always the hour for her. So, over the fence she went, May and Gene following more carefully.

They found three lingering blossoms,

and one was tied in the corner of each handkerchief, its crushed odor being the sweetest of all, and they were as happy over finding a beloved sweet-shrub as the gold seeker over a nugget of gold.

By the time they were back to the road, Uncle Sam had the mules standing by the zig-zag fence, the children climbed to its top and were easily in their places again, with flying hair and rosy cheeks. As further on they went and nearer came to the river, the flowers and vines increased in luxuriance. Soon there were honeysuckles scrambling over the rail fences and trumpet vines threw out their first flaming orange-red trumpets from the tops of tall trees, or accommodatingly offered them from low branches within the children's reach. The mules were treated to a generous share, honeysuckles nodding from their patient ears and glowing trumpets hanging from their stiff manes. Gaily chatting as they went, the riders turned at last from the road and struck off into the woods, jogging along till they reached the heart of the live-oak grove, where the children went, sometimes, for picnics. The trees were tall, the foliage high, leaving great open spaces beneath, while the beautiful Southern grey moss drooped from the high branches and festooned the open spaces.

They stopped at a favorite spot to eat a little lunch of fruit and cake, and Uncle Sam helped them down with care, as he always did when they gave him time, then led the mules away to a spot where they might graze. As his footsteps died away, the stillness, a sort of funereal stillness, combined with the grey moss draping, beautiful but somber,

brought sudden depression upon the children's spirits; they sat on a fallen log a moment silently, then May exclaimed in a whisper:

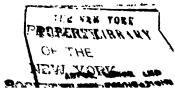
"My! it's scary!" and the three giggled nervously.

"Let's tell ghost stories," cried Anne under her breath, her eyes big and lips indrawn.

"No, no!" protested May, sharply.
"It might bring them."

Then came the sudden, startling sound of something, or somebody, rushing through the woods from the direction of the river, and the girls clung to each other in real fear. But the next moment a beautiful shepherd dog bounded into view and up to them with great demonstration of joy.

"Oh, you beauty!" cried Anne, "Where did you come from?"



And the big, handsome fellow laid his head in her lap with instant avowal of comradeship. Then, as quickly, he ran from her in the direction from whence he came, barking and looking back anxiously.

Uncle Sam hurried up from the other direction at the sound of a strange dog barking, and the collie rushed back to him, jumped upon him eagerly and licked his hands,—then off again he went toward the river, barking and looking back as before.

"He wants us to come with him," exclaimed Anne.

"Yas'm, I think dat's hit," returned the old man, "I'll foller him an' see ef anything is wrong," and then as the girls started on too, he added, "But don't youalls come too clost, — wait 'twell I see." The dog plunged ahead, Uncle Sam followed as fast as his rheumatic limbs would allow, and the girls trooped excitedly after.

They soon reached a marshy strip of land covered with tall cypress trees bordering the river. There were many stagnant pools about, with the old cypress "knees" standing up from them in smooth whiteness, suggesting ghosts indeed, some of them having very queer shapes.

Among these they suddenly espied the cause of the big dog's distress. At the edge of one of the pools stood, with peculiar stiffness, a youth of perhaps sixteen. Uncle Sam and the girls saw at once that he was a stranger in distress and noted also in the first quick glance as he lifted his cap, that there was something foreign to them in his fine open face, high

forehead with hair roached back, and in his trim hunting-suit and high-top brown boots. Then he spoke:

"I am caught fast in the mud, don't you know! Just fancy it!" And there was a peculiar richness to the young voice, the vowels were very broad indeed, while the consonants took on a long, rolling sound.

The youth looked at them with combined deprecation and gentlemanly appeal as they drew nearer.

The girls' eyes were big with surprise, and before they could speak Uncle Sam had taken in the situation, and knew there was no time to lose. The marsh was full of dangerous quicksand, and the young stranger had been caught fast by his feet.

The dog had also understood and had, therefore, started without delay for help. Uncle Sam acted instantly. Going as close as he dared, he reached out, and the horny hands of the old darky and the stranger's young, aristocratic palms clasped sturdily. Then they pulled with might and main, but the sticky mud would not release the imbedded feet. The dog ran about, barking nervously, and the girls stood silently by, anxious and frightened.

The old man relaxed a little at last, taking breath and looking carefully down to see if he dared go a step nearer. It would not do.

Then Anne's eyes flashed with sudden purpose and she cried, "Let us pull, too," ran to the old darky, clasped his waist with her arms and called excitedly to the others: "May, you pull me, and Gene, you pull May!"

"Beg pardon, young ladies," ex-

claimed the youth, "but I cannot let you strain yourselves!"

They were all too much in earnest to answer.

Pull they did, with a will, and Anne was a very strong girl, so their pulling told, and the imprisoned feet slowly came to the surface. All strained on breathlessly,—then Uncle Sam shouted: "Run, chillun, run!"

They obeyed instantly, and the old darky and the youth staggered back to safety.

"Thanks, thanks awfully," the boy said, springing from the ground as soon as he could find breath, and the overjoyed dog would let him.

Uncle Sam rose laboriously, ignoring a bruised hip, and went and dipped his hat full of water to cleanse the mudcovered boots of the youth. The girls were looking on with excitement unabated, and the young fellow turned to Anne as the eldest.

"I am frightfully mortified, don't you know, to be making so much trouble."

Uncle Sam instantly stepped between the girls and the young stranger. His figure was erect and dignified.

"I is Miss Alice — Mis' Carter's sarving man."

With quick recognition of the old man's responsibility, the young fellow replied, lifting his cap, "I am Donald Thornton, the grandson of Major Alex Thornton, and I have just come from my home in England to spend a few years here."

Entirely satisfied, Uncle Sam then turned to the girls and said in his best manner, "Miss Anne an' Miss May Car-

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ter, an' Miss Gene Grey, Master Thornton."

There were mutual bows of recognition, rather shy on the part of the three girls, and with a touch of courtliness on the part of young Donald, but he was natural and ready in speech with them.

"It was beastly stupid of me to get caught in the mud as I did, but I was so interested in these queer bleached roots, or whatever they are, which stick up in the water here. I never saw anything like them, and I wanted to get a closer look at them. Rex here," fondling the big dog, "knew jolly well the danger and barked warningly the minute I went near, but I did not heed him as I should. Did I, old fellow?" And the dog's affectionate assent and deep regret and joy were mirrored in his intelligent brown eyes.

"Oh, he is such a beauty," exclaimed Anne, "I loved him the minute I saw him!"

Donald smiled his pleasure at her appreciation, and then said warmly, "Go and speak to the young lady, Rex."

And at once the big fellow walked to the girl's side and laid his paw in her hand.

Anne instantly dropped upon her knees and put her arms about his neck.

"You are the dearest doggie I ever saw," she exclaimed, and a lasting compact of friendship was sealed between them.

May and Gene stooped beside her, too, and added their caresses.

It was a pretty, warming scene for the young English boy, who, truth to tell, was a bit homesick. His mother had been dead only a few months, the bond was

close between them, and the lad's heart was tender and full of longing. His father had brought him over a fortnight before, thinking the trip to America would be helpful to him, that it was the time for him to enter close into the heart of his paternal grandmother, and imbibe some Americanism as well, for the father's business linked England and America in its activities, was large and permanent he hoped, and he wanted the boy to be well equipped to perpetuate it. Hence it was important that he know America. He proposed that the boy go for a year or so to his old home school, a most excellent preparatory college, where he himself had laid substantial foundation for a liberal education.

"Where did you get this dear doggie?" asked Anne in frank friendliness. "I got him in London, and I have had him three years," Donald replied.

"And he has come all the way from England!" she exclaimed, while May and Gene echoed her surprise.

"Yes," returned Donald with energy.

"Do you think I would have come without him? Fancy it!" he ended with his characteristic expression, and the "a" exceedingly broad.

His peculiarities of speech emphasized again, the girls were reminded once more that he was a stranger, indeed, and grew a bit shy.

But Donald turned to the cypress trees with renewed interest. "This is a sort of uncanny spot, don't you know. These tremendous trees with their frightfully large trunks and beautiful lacy foliage, making a great canopy overhead; then the dark pools of water beneath, with

these, — well, pieces of statuary, I'd call them, — standing about in the water, makes it seem like some artist's forgotten studio."

"They do look like some of the plaster figures in our art department at school," said Anne, with no eye for the poetic, but Gene smiled radiantly, with her love of the idealistic.

"That one looks like the plaster cast of a man's crooked arm that I was trying to draw yesterday at school, — but I never thought of it before. We've been here so often," said Anne. Then she added practically, "Our house was covered with shingles made from these big cypress trees."

"You don't say," said Donald. "I should think one of them would make shingles enough to cover a pretty big house."

Uncle Sam put in a word here: "Young ladies" (before such a fine young gentleman he dropped his familiar term "chillun"), "hit is time we went home."

"Oh, Uncle Sam," they chorused, "we haven't been across the ferry yet!"

That was always a part of the program, and when Donald's watch had been consulted and they found there really was time, they all went back to the live-oak grove hung with moss where they remembered their lunch and shared it with their new-found friend, while Donald again expressed his surprise and delight at nature's cunning arts. Then the mules were brought and Donald went for his pony, which was also tethered nearby, and begged that he might go to the ferry with them.

"Oh, yes, do come!" the girls cried

together, and Uncle Sam smiled his willingness. The old man was a good judge of character, and the English boy with his ready courtesy and fine open face had won his heart at once. Besides, didn't he know all about Major Thornton's folks,—they had passed his house on the way out,—"the Thornton niggers had been quality jes' lac his white folkses niggers!"—and that settled the whole matter.

The little party paced leisurely out of the grove and then along a curving road till the Cahaba River lay before them at a point where the banks were steep and the stream more narrow. Then Uncle Sam whistled for the ferryman who lived on the other side, and the girls soon watched with ever fresh delight as the big flat boat, tethered to an immense cable, was slowly poled from either end by two stout negroes to the rhythm of a weird, fascinating plantation melody, the strong soprano of the one and the high tenor of the other calling and answering in crude antiphonal, till the big boat was finally brought end-wise against the road on their side.

Then the little party rode upon it, the big black mules, who had known from the first what was coming, leading, and Donald following on his pony, with Rex at his heels. The water looked so deep, and the spring current tugged so strongly at the swaying boat, while the weird song went on again, that the girls held their breath in delightful shivers, — just as they always did, and the whole experience was a novel pleasure for Donald. Safely on the other side, they must start back again, and this the ferryman was ready to have them do for the compen-

sation asked, so it was all to go over again and Donald was so alert and eager in his questions that it was a time of great delight.

The ride back was equally full of interest; the girls told their new friend about every flower they passed, and dismounting again in a twinkling, they found him a sweet-shrub to tie in the corner of his handkerchief! This took some time and a lively search; then Gene was persuaded to give him her poem on the grass, which he said, in a fine hearty way, that he liked "Jolly well, don't you know."

"It is by Emily Dickinson," Anne told him. "Mother calls her our family poet laureate. She says every family ought to have one."

"My word! but she is right! Ours at home was Robert Browning," and the English boy's fine eyes flashed appreciation. Then he took from his pocket a little silver match case with a beautifully wrought head of Browning, and handed it to her, saying softly, "Mother gave me that to carry always that I might be reminded of the many fine things Browning said."

After the sweet-shrub hunt, May had climbed up behind Uncle Sam and Gene on old King, leaving Anne to ride Queen alone with the strange youth on his pony beside her.

An odd-looking pair they were; the boy with his fresh color, general up-to-dateness, taut rein and mettlesome pony; the girl sun-burned, wind-blown and disheveled, a long tear in the pink chambray dress, as a matter of course, and sitting easily upon the big, black, sleepy mule.

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But, feeling fully acquainted with the stranger now, and in natural oblivion as to appearances, Anne was her own happy, unconscious self, talking away with perfect freedom.

The boy insisted on accompanying the little party to their gate, and so, Mrs. Carter, seated on the front veranda, saw them turn in at the driveway attended by an erect, strange lad on a well-groomed pony, tipping his hat gracefully and courteously as he bade the girls good-by.

CHAPTER IV

FRIENDS

MRS. CARTER looked at them in puzzled inquiry as they came racing up the long walk with its boxwood hedge full of bursting scarlet, berry-like blossoms.

- "Oh, mother!" cried Anne, who was in the lead as usual, "we found the nicest boy!"
- "Found the nicest boy, what do you mean?"
- "Yes, we found him, didn't we, May and Gene?" she called breathlessly.
- "Yes," said the two together, equally breathless.

"Sticking right in the mud," laughed Anne, with dancing eyes and feet.

"Children, you are surely bewitched," said Mrs. Carter. "Now, sit down and tell me."

They tumbled down beside her and the three pairs of elbows dug into her knees, as was their wont, while they eagerly told of their adventure.

"I remember hearing," she said at last, "that Donald Thornton's boy was to come here for a few years with his American grandparents. His father went to England as a boy, almost, and has been very successful in business. His mother died recently, I think."

"Yes, mother, she did," said Anne, "and I did feel so sorry for him when he told us, for his lip quivered, mother," and the tears were in her own eyes.

"Poor boy," returned Mrs. Carter,

tenderly. "His mother was a lady, — in the English sense, I mean, — not wearing the title, I believe, but of noble blood."

"He is so nice, mother," cried Anne with a girl's frank enthusiasm, and May and Gene joined her in the praise of their new-found friend.

A friend indeed, he proved to be, with as evident a liking for the three girls as they had for him, and when he came to see their splendid tennis court, he exclaimed in his hearty English way, "This is great! There is nothing in England better," which was the limit of praise for Donald.

Through the girls, he came into touch with the quaintest and most interesting things in his father's boyhood home. He had been brought up a home boy, with his mother for constant companion and a governess for his lessons. He was learn-

ing to love the new grandmother, and there was love and kindness in plenty with her, but she was so different from his mother, and — the heartache and longing were still insistent. For a while, at least, there must be the sacred void which no other motherliness could desecrate.

These new girl-friends, in their frank liking, warmed his heart and there was no latent pain of contrast.

The four often played croquet, — or croky, with the accent on the first syllable, which was Donald's English way of putting it, over which the three made very merry, and they had such good times together.

Rex always accompanied Donald, and the girls came to love him as though he were their "very own dog," as they warmly said. Often Polly made a sixth comrade, hanging in her cage from a tree-branch at the edge of the court. The first time she saw Rex, she bridled with surprised pleasure, then called shrilly, "My pups! my pups!" and when Rex showed no response, began eager whistling, with the repeated calls, "My pups! my pups!"

"Oh," exclaimed Anne, "she thinks he is one of the puppies!" And then explained to Donald that they had two lovely puppies the year before which Polly simply adored, called them her pups, and never wanted anybody to touch them but herself. "Somebody stole them last summer," she ended, "and I don't believe Polly has ever seen a dog of any sort since. Rex doesn't look a bit like them, but she knows he is a doggie, —don't you, dear old Poll?"

And Polly agreed, with a repetition of

her cry, "My pups, my pups," and this acceptance on the part of Polly of his beloved Rex brought her also into full fellowship with the English boy. She entered into their games, laughing gleefully as they did, and echoing their cries of, "That's good!" "I made it!" etc.

Sometimes the comical Cahaba, who had come to be a fixed attaché of the place, peeked through the fence, which separated the court from the orchard, and hungrily drank in the fun. Spying her one day as they played, Anne cried:

"Donald, you must see Cahaba dance the 'corn-field shuffle,'" an accomplishment of hers which the girls had discovered.

[&]quot;What's that?" laughed Donald.

[&]quot;Wait and you'll see."

[&]quot;Oh, Cahaba, come and dance for us," she called, and the little darky, nothing

loth, wriggled through an incredibly small opening in the fence, with furtive glances back to see that Uncle Sam or Mammy Sue were not on the watch, and stood grinning before them. Her scant one-piece garment of copper-colored linsey, hung forlornly about her wiry black legs, and her face of shining ebony, with the tightly wound woolly knobs of hair extending in every direction above it, was a study for the cartoonist. Her eyes began at once to roll and her body to wriggle.

"'She's gittin' the music into her bones now,' quoted Anne in laughing explanation, and instantly the tuning up, so to speak, began to show results. A rhythmical whining set in, which increased in volume and spirit till it was a veritable rhapsody; the rusty bare feet and swaying arms got into full swing at

last and the wriggles, the long sweeps, the high steps, the lusty swings came in a perfect fury of motion and wild melody, the voice rising higher and more weirdly with every moment.

The girls looked on, dumbly fascinated, as they always did, and Donald could only exclaim with a great rolling of the "r," "How extr'ordinary!"

The little imp, delighted at the impression she was making, added a series of smirks and bows and grins that simply convulsed them all, when suddenly that dreaded, warning cry came, "You, Cahaba, come heah or I'll beat the life outen you!" which they had been expecting, and the flying, rusty heels went over that orchard fence before the spectators could catch their breath.

But the little darky could not be kept away; she stole to the fence every chance opportunity offered, while her antics were an enjoyable asset for their game, and she received plenty of encouragement from the young folks. Donald declared that she was a whole vaudeville show!

Donald and Anne played tennis alone a great deal during the summer days, for it was rather strenuous work for May and Gene to keep up with them at tennis. The girl grew supple and agile in the fine exercise, and being already wellgrown for her years, she began rapid development of a splendid physical young womanhood.

But she was still only a child at heart, and her association with Donald was of the frankest comradeship. It was not long after she knew him till she had unbosomed her trials to him, — the difficulties she had in growing up properly.

Donald smiled at the frankness and murmured politely:

"I fancy you are less trouble to her than you think."

"No, indeed," she returned earnestly, "I make heaps of bother growing up! Now, Gene grows just like a little flower; she doesn't make one bit of fuss, and May doesn't either, — that is, not much, — but I make such a fuss you can just hear me!"

And then her grey-blue eyes sparkled, while he replied appreciatively with his "Fancy it!" It was wonderful how many emotions that phrase expressed for him under his varying emphases.

"I make such a clatter all the time with my things. I am always asking, 'where is my hat, — or my pencil, my coat, or my books,' "she went on dramatically. "Or else, somebody is calling to me, 'Anne, here's your hat, lying on the front porch, or up in the fig tree;' or that my book is just anywhere you may think of," she ended, with a long sigh this time.

"My word," returned the boy with equal frankness, "why don't you learn to take care of them?"

"I am trying awful hard," she declared impressively, "but I just can't! You see, it doesn't really trouble me a bit when I can't find my things. I just look till I do, — and somebody else nearly

always helps me," she put in ingenuously, "but the trouble is, it bothers other people, — mother especially, — and I really, truly don't want to bother her."

Then the girl laughed merrily.

- "Do English girls and boys have growing pains?"
- "I should say so, I had them frightfully," he responded with feeling.

"Well, Mammy Sue says I don't have 'em myself, — and I don't, not even a weeny one, but I give them to everybody else!" And her ready laugh rang out again in which Donald joined.

It was impossible not to like this sunnyhearted girl, and Donald did, and in turn told her many things of his dear life in England, finding her always an eager, sympathetic listener.

Now the ubiquitous Cahaba was a very keen observer, and she did not fail to notice the youth and young girl often talking together while they rested.

One morning, however, when they were absorbed in their game, they failed to notice that she was there, and she spent her time with Polly, who hung in her cage nearby,—with what result was shown that afternoon when the girls sat in the nursery with their books, and Polly's shrill voice cried out:

"Anne's got a sweetheart! Anne's got a sweetheart!"

The girl flew for her as soon as her consternation had passed somewhat and commanded:

"Polly Carter, don't you ever say that again!"

Anne could not have told what made her so indignant, but there was a sleeping something in the fresh, young heart that was outraged. The other children gave her no time to analyze. How blessed it is that there are younger brothers and sisters for many who are growing up!

May and Gene laughed at Polly's speech, and May said teasingly:

"Oh, Polly knows, like the rest of us, that Anne has a sweetheart!"

"No such thing!" blazed Anne, "We are something a great deal nicer, — we are friends!"

CHAPTER V

A CHRISTMAS SURPRISE

THE summer passed, and the fall came, with the return to books for the children and their new friend. There were two fine old colleges in the little town, flanking on either side, at a distance of a block or so away, the long, straggling main street which fronted everything else of any importance in the place. One of these schools was for girls, the other for boys. Students for both came from all over the state, and many adjacent states as well. The boys' school was a military one, and the soldier's training was what

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both Donald and his father desired. The grey uniform with its brass buttons, the erect carriage of the students was just to Donald's liking, and when the boys were out in uniform and the girls of the college donned their caps and gowns, he found the town gay with youth, tricked out in the paraphernalia of learning and bravery.

Anne entered that year the collegiate department of the girls' school, but, to her surprise, did not feel any more "grown-up." She had completed the preparatory course provided to accommodate the children of the town,—which could not as yet accept the public school for its highest class of children. May and Gene were still in this department with two or three years yet before them. When Donald first appeared in his brass-buttoned dress-suit, Anne, with

the younger girls, felt that he was lost to them forever, but, to their delight, he was the same all-round, jolly comrade. Necessarily, they did not see so much of him, but as Christmas drew near, and the preliminary holiday of a week began, he was on hand to help them with the gathering and packing of the beautiful southern smilax from the woods, and Christmas flowers from the Blossom Shop and Carter yards to send to northern hospitals for children.

Margaret Larson, also, a new friend of Anne's, was often there to help. She was the daughter of a new teacher in the girls' college and lived with her mother in a cottage on the campus. She was just Anne's age, but her exact opposite in every particular. A dainty, slender girl with dark auburn curls, the fairest of skin, and such pretty, gentle ways; a girl

that quickly won hearts old and young. Anne already loved her extravagantly and was much loved in return, — after a fashion life has of bringing opposites into congeniality.

Margaret was a dear, responsive listener and the keynote to her character was sympathy, — which Anne was often needing, and their times together always called forth repeated exclamations of, "Oh, Anne," in varying grades of surprise, interest and condolence.

Such fun they all had on the trips to the woods in the big wagon with King and Queen in the traces and Uncle Sam at the reins, and then coming back in a perfect forest of beautiful lacey vines! Packing the smilax in big goods-boxes was just as fine sport, and with Mrs. Carter to superintend, the smaller boxes of brilliant japonicas with spicy citronalis and wild olive interspersed, were simply delicious, Donald said.

Just as the last box was ready, three days before Christmas, with Donald and Margaret there and the Blossom Shop a hubbub of gay talk, there was a knock at the door, and who should stand there in large, beaming outline, his restless forelock bobbing happily, his stern eyes twinkling, but Dr. Murton the good doctor from the North, who had won the hearts of the Carters the year before, and who had planned their tennis and croquet courts.

The girls fell upon him with cries of delight, while their mother welcomed him with moist eyes which they did not understand.

"So this Blossom Shop business is still going on," he cried heartily, when he had a chance. "Well, that is just right. I

have come down on the same sort of an errand, — so I'll fall to at once. You're all done? Why, bless me, isn't there a box I can nail up, or something?"

"Oh, you can carry off what is left," laughed Anne, and, running gaily to him, she threw a long spray of smilax about him. The others followed her example and covered him with odds and ends of vine and blossom, to his great enjoyment.

"I am glad to get here before this Southern sunlight and fragrant business is over, for I want to work myself into the spirit of this thing, — if I have got to be the agent of the wholesale branch, — that sanitarium this little lady," drawing Gene into his bedecked arms, "and her aunty have built. I have come down to hunt up receivers of their bounty, and my heart is absolutely so frozen up that I had to come here to thaw it out!"

"Your heart froze up!" cried the Carter girls scornfully, — and Gene felt of it to see, reporting that it was so warm she knew "it must be most boiling!"

"How's the 'growing up' coming on?" the doctor asked, after a bit, with twinkling eyes turned towards Anne, for he knew her difficulties.

"Now, doctor dear, please don't ask me," she returned tragically, "ask Gene or May, they're doing it just beautifully!"

He shook with laughter: "Where was it we found your hat last winter when I was here, — down in the well, wasn't it?"

"You know it wasn't," she cried, "it was in the river!"

When the merriment had somewhat subsided, she turned to Donald and Margaret her eyes sparkling.

"I have such a time with my hats! don't know where the one I am wearing now will go, - perhaps in the fire and up the chimney in smoke. My spring hat melted in a shower, my last winter one, that the doctor is talking about, blew over into the creek when it was awful high, and I had left it lying on the bank just a minute, then forgot all about it; and it went sailing down the creek like a little boat, I reckon, for we found it caught in some brush at the river's edge where the creek runs into it, when the doctor was there with us and the mules a few days afterwards. It was the funniest thing to come across your own hat sitting up in the river like that!"

And they all made merry again, Margaret with her sweet "Oh, Anne!" and Donald with his laughing, "Fancy it!"
"You know I told you that is the way

my things do. You needn't be surprised, Donald, to see a hat of mine, — or anything else, — sailing the ocean some time when you're crossing it," she ended resignedly.

"But she is really learning to anchor her belongings better than she did," said Mrs. Carter brightly, turning to the doctor, "and we do not complain of the way she is 'growing up!'"

Mrs. Carter was a firm believer in fanning every spark of encouragement.

"Mother, mother!" cried the girl contritely, smothering her with kisses, and tumbling her own hair out of every semblance of order with the utmost unconsciousness, while the doctor declared, "Of course she is improving, last year's hat went to the river, this year's only got as far as the window sill."

This family badinage was a new sort

of thing to Donald, brought up in more formal fashion, but he enjoyed the freedom and good-will of it; and the doctor, with his fine, strong face and blustering, kindly ways, while a distinctly new type, instantly won the English boy's liking. So the good times went on unchecked.

The day following the doctor's arrival Anne had a wonderful hour alone with Mrs. Carter, learned a beautiful secret that drew soft tints to the wide grey-blue eyes and opened for her young heart a first understanding of life's sacred mysteries.

The girls were never gayer than on Christmas eve, and such fun as they had deciding where to hang the doctor's stocking, and finding one large enough to suit them. They were up later than usual with it all, and next morning slept in spite of their expectation to be up very

early. However, they never went to bed on Christmas eve with one eye open so as to be up early, for the eager cry of "Christmas gif" from the colored servants, which is the first sound on a Christmas morning in a Southern home, makes this unnecessary. But the house was so still this time that they did not waken at all until Mammy Sue stood by each bed and gently wakened each young sleeper. Each time it was with a start, for it was so unusual, - and then, when they realized that it was Christmas morning, it was the more astonishing to have to be waked up. Had anything happened? Mammy's face was shining, but she said " Sh-s-s-s!"

Why did she want them to be so still? "N'em mind," whispered the old woman, "you-alls hurry up an' dress, and come down-stairs, — then you'll

know. But there mustn't be no Christmas giffin' round dis house dis mornin', 'ca'se yer Ma was kinder sick las' night, an' there mustn't be no fuss anywheres!" she ended emphatically.

The girls dressed excitedly, forgetting all about gifts. Anne said, "Oh, oh, I wonder," under her breath, and little Gene had a strange catch at her heart. Mother sick! But it couldn't be anything bad, for Mammy looked happy, and tried to comfort herself.

The three were ready at very nearly the same time, Anne forgetting all about the mirror in her excitement, — and she had been doing somewhat better with her toilet lately, but Christmas morning is an off morning for most things, — and this was destined to be the Christmas of Christmases for that home.

They tiptoed down the stairs and into

the library, where Mammy Sue had told them to go when they were ready, — and Dr. Murton greeted them with a face which outshone Mammy's, if possible.

"Merry Christmas, children!" he cried with outstretched hands and twinkling eyes. "I thought you-all caught folks 'Christmas gif' down here and I have mine ready for you, but you didn't catch me!"

"We forgot it," they exclaimed, with a return to the normal.

"Well, well, just when I have the finest gift in the universe ready for you!"

Then his face fell into tender lines: "I have for you as a gift from God this morning the sweetest blossom the world has ever known, — there is Mammy Sue with it now!"

The two younger girls turning in utter bewilderment, and Anne with something

awesome and timidly ecstatic throbbing in her heart, saw Mammy Sue come in, Uncle Sam smiling behind her, a soft bundle in her arms. An impressive moment, — and then she lifted a corner of the snowy blanket with a proud hand, displaying a round little pink face!

"Oh, a baby! a baby!" they chorused with indrawn breath. "Is it ours? Oh, is it ours, Mammy Sue?" cried May and Gene. And the hushed eagerness of their voices made the doctor turn away to dry his eyes.

"Hit's yourn," solemnly declared Mammy Sue. "Yer Ma's an' yer Pa's, an' yer own little brother, — bless him!"

The delight of the three girls knew no bounds, Anne's no less, rather more, because it was not unexpected and the climax was reached when they were allowed to go in and see the baby laid in their

mother's arms, while they kissed her white cheeks, and father stood by with eyes that outshone everybody's!

Christmas in the ordinary sense was absolutely forgotten, and the day was like a fairy tale. A Christmas baby, - innocent reflection of the Christ child himself, - what has the world to offer that surpasses this? That dear household in the far South could certainly think of nothing in all the wealth of the universe to equal it. Each girl had to be seated in a low rocker in turn and hold the precious brother a while, look at his cunning little feet, unclasp his tiny fingers that she might feel their soft touch about her own, and count the hairs upon his round head, - almost, - and how marvellous a thing a new life became to Anne, in her turn, with that fresh background of sacred knowledge. It was a day of days,

and almost ten o'clock before the girls even looked into their stockings or opened their gifts, and then, with the exception of one precious gift to Anne, they were soon laid aside to talk about that other, so much greater gift.

Anne's treasure was a locket and chain which had been her mother's. It was of delicate workmanship and beautifully jeweled, but two miniatures within the locket of her father and mother in their youth made it most precious. She had seen it before, but to have it for her very own was a different matter, and at once drew closer the tie between the girl and her mother, of which the girl had first found sweet consciousness in taking her mother's name.

Mr. and Mrs. Carter had decided to give it to her on this Christmas to prove their trust in her, and to further awaken her sense of womanly responsibility. It was to be cared for as nothing she had ever possessed (and no complaint was ever made of her concerning its care), while many tender sleeping things were aroused in the girl whenever she looked upon the youthful faces within it. Her mother seemed ever afterward like one she knew. A girl this mother had been, and the merry grey-blue eyes were so like her own that she felt a peculiar sense of comradeship as she looked into them.

It was worn with a new pride and tenderness that she had never known before.

But, to return to the Christmas day,—another surprise awaited the Carter household on this day of days. About half-past ten there was a ring at the front door and the girls, all three, rushing to answer it (for whom could it be but Donald?), found Aunt Martha, Gene's

Aunt Martha Grey, from the North, standing there, her face smiling in a sort of apologetic way, looking her prim, immaculate self, however, from the modish hat of quiet elegance above her white hair to the tip of her unblemished toes. But by the time three pairs of ecstatic arms had bound her neck, the hat was awry, and she was a decidedly becrumpled lady when the doctor stepped out into the hall. His eyes took fire at sight of her, however, while it was all he could do to keep from following the children's example.

"Oh, Aunt Martha, — Aunt Martha, — do you know?" cried Anne, the first to find a coherent word.

"Know what," she returned, and her face showed she had no hint.

Such a chorus of "Ohs" followed, and then "A baby! a baby!" "A baby brother!" "We've got it!" "Came last night!" "A Christmas baby!" a perfect avalanche of exclamations were poured upon her, from which she extracted the fact that there was a really new baby in the house, and dismay was her first emotion.

"I should not have come," she declared to the doctor rather than to the girls, but they cried:

"You should, you should, — Mother will say so," and the doctor said quietly, "You need not have a regret, — it is absolutely all right."

"I came in last night, but my train was late and I went to the hotel without coming here. I had intended my surprise for Christmas eve. I had planned to stay at the hotel this visit anyway, which will be a brief one, — but I could not resist coming down to have a bit of their

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Christmas. I did not dream of such a Christmas as this." She ended, flushing in a girlish way that many New England women keep for life.

The girls were gone to take the news, tiptoeing, when they remembered mother, and thoughtfully calling their father from her room to tell him first.

"I imagine you will stay at the hotel," said the doctor dryly to Miss Martha when they had gone.

And then Mr. Carter was there with his cordial greeting, and there is no use telling that Miss Martha's trunk was soon in the best spare room and there had been a moment's warm greeting from Mrs. Carter, a peep at the blessed baby, and Miss Martha had herself been made to feel that she had come opportunely by Mrs. Carter's earnest, "How glad I am that you will mother the children for me

awhile. I am just at the point with them where a lapse would be so detrimental,—and I have not been able to keep things quite up to the mark for a time past, I am afraid," she smiled a little wanly, "and you, with your thoroughness, will bring them up to the standard for me, I know. Mammy Sue, I am sure, will have her hands full with the boy and me for awhile. I would have gotten in another woman, but the Mammy Sues are scarce in the South now."

She knew if Aunt Martha thought she could be of service in the home, that would hold her when nothing else would.

The house was large and roomy, there was competent help in the kitchen, and, under Mammy Sue's capable supervision, everything in the housekeeping went on smoothly, as Mrs. Carter knew it would, during the fortnight that the doctor

stayed by to see that all went well with mother and child. The old family physician of the Greys and Carters had recently died, and not wanting to try, for this important event, the young man who had taken his place, Dr. Murton had been asked to come down at the last moment. He had not seen Miss Martha for some time before coming, as matters were not going well between them. There should have been a marriage long before between the doctor and Miss Martha, but that lady, so capable and quickly decisive in other matters, was hesitant and uncertain in this. The doctor was impulsive and was "letting her alone," as he expressed it to himself.

The weeks went flying by; the doctor was traveling about through the state in search of children who might be helped in the Sanitarium; Donald had seen the

marvelous baby brother and Aunt Martha, both of whom he warmly pronounced a "jolly good sort," whatever that meant; Cahaba had been allowed to come in and see the baby, a privilege for her which kings might envy; the girls were back at school, — and, beautiful to relate, Mother was going about as usual, holding the precious baby in her lap or carrying him from room to room.

The baby had been named, — this must not be forgotten. It had been a very difficult matter to decide upon a name for such a wonderful baby, of course, but one day before Dr. Murton left as they discussed the question, Mr. Carter said, smiling at the doctor, "Suppose we call him 'Murton?'" and the doctor gave back a quick, pleased glance at his friend, while everybody said it was just the name for the baby! Then Gene, looking at

Aunt Martha, and feeling that they were left out, said, "Please put Grey in somewhere," and instantly the whole thing was fixed — Murton Grey Carter was the baby's name!

Then one day, as Mrs. Carter sat with baby Murton in her lap, Aunt Martha opened her reserved heart and unfolded its troubles. She simply had not been able to make up her mind to marry!

"Isn't that a confession for a sensible woman of my age to make?" she said, between laughter and tears.

Mrs. Carter was instantly sympathetic and full of understanding. "I know exexactly how you must feel," she said warmly.

"I do not know that I can accommodate my life to another life, now," said Miss Martha tremulously.

"But you can," insisted Mrs. Carter,

"thereby rounding out your own, till when you go back home you will seem to yourself like that 'little Arctic flower upon the polar hem' our beloved poet laureate, Emily Dickinson, tells about, which

"" Went wandering down the latitudes
Until it puzzled came
To continents of summer,
To firmaments of sun
To strange, bright crowds of flowers,
And birds of foreign tongue!"

"You see, I know that well, for I said it many times when I was deciding to marry," she ended laughingly.

Miss Martha echoed the laugh uncertainly. "I have always known if I ever did it at all, it must be here, — in the Southland with you and yours. I seem to be afflicted with dual personality. When I am with you, I feel free as a bird, and it is the most natural thing in the world

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for even me to think of marriage. But at home, alone, I return to my other self, — reserved, restrained, — and it is impossible!"

Mrs. Carter covered her hand with a warm clasp, and said earnestly, "Let it be here and at once, — the doctor is in the South, — we can arrange it all!"

And sitting there by the mother and the new-born babe, Aunt Martha made sudden and full decision. "I will do it," she said, "and how good you are to let me!"

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Mrs. Carter, "and the girls will be beside themselves with joy."

Then after a moment Miss Martha burst into sudden uncontrollable laughter, which Mrs. Carter echoed from pure sympathy without having the least idea what it was about. But Miss Martha was finally able to say, "I'm just like Mammy Sue! Don't you remember when Uncle Sam persuaded her to marry him, while you were all at my house, she was found to have had her wedding finery in her trunk, all ready for any such possible occasion!" And they both laughed gaily at the remembrance of that "nigger wedding," as Uncle Sam and Mammy Sue put it, in that stately Northern home and of Mammy Sue in her white swiss, long veil and orange blossoms. "I have my wedding dress in my trunk, too," confessed Aunt Martha at last, "for I had suspicions of a change of personality."

"It is all perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Mrs. Carter, and then, of course, had to find out what the dress was, and all the other things women like to know at such times.

CHAPTER VI

A DISTURBED WEDDING

THE girls were indeed delighted when the secret was confided to them, and wedding preparations soon electrified the very air with joy. The doctor appeared on the scene, — the jolly doctor they had known so well, but with something new and fine in his strong face, a touch of reverence when his eyes rested upon Miss Martha, and an added tenderness with the children.

Where was the wedding to be? In the parlor, or the library or the broad hall? It would be just a family party, nobody from the outside but the minister and

Donald and Anne's friend, Margaret Larson. The latter as a concession to the children's desire to be bride's maids. May and Gene would come in first, Anne and Margaret next, just before the bride and groom, while Donald was to be best man, looking after details, giving signals, etc. Mother was to play the wedding march, father was to give the bride away, while the audience was to be the baby, Uncle Sam, Mammy Sue and Cahaba! Was there ever such a wedding?

But where was it to be? This was the question that seemed hard to decide till the doctor came. Then it was a question no more.

"The Blossom Shop is the place for it," he declared at once. "If it had not been for that blessed shop, there would never have been any wedding. Children," he cried turning to them, "hasn't affair? First there was the flower business of Gene and her mother, with the Blossom Shop to carry on the business, then the fire that burned down the shop, then the will that the fire brought to light, next the trip to the North that resulted from the finding of the will, and, lastly, all the joy that has followed since from that visit, of which this wedding is a part, — and so, don't we go back to the blessed shop which first gave out its fragrance and beauty to the world, as the cause of it all? Of course, the wedding must be in the Blossom Shop!"

And there was not a dissenting voice. This was what really decided, also, that there should be a children's setting for this drama of age, and determined its make-up even to the list of guests!

The bride laughingly declared she had

lost her personality, anyway, and was glad to have everything decided for her, for the first time in her life. It was indeed a case of lost personality for the New England spinster, who had always been heretofore self-sufficient. But she saw a new breadth of horizon spreading out before her, and, with open mind and heart, wisely determined to go forward.

The girls continued on at school during the few days of preparation, but their hurrying feet lost no time in getting home in the afternoons. The mules and Uncle Sam took them to the woods again for Southern smilax, and the Blossom Shop was made a thing of beauty with the lacey vines and beautiful japonicas. A piano was brought to the shop from a store of the little town, — and Aunt Martha said it must remain there permanently.

Everything was gaiety as the preparations went forward. Donald helped, of course, and Cahaba, peeking in with hungry eyes, was allowed to come in. Then the children cried, "Oh, doctor and Aunt Martha, you should just hear Cahaba sing and give the 'corn-field shuffle!'"

"I should say so!" cried Donald, "She's a bally good show!"

"Let's have it," said the doctor, and Cahaba was her very liveliest.

As she whined and sang and whirled and stepped and glided, the doctor and Miss Martha laughed till the tears streamed down their cheeks; and then the performer felt that it was the time for her masterpiece, — which, as a matter of fact, had been prohibited by her overseers, but would probably be appreciated by this more elegant audience.

"De preacher he stir 'em up 'bout der souls," she began, without warning, "how dey gwine ter git losted, twel dey gits convicshun, an' den he tell 'em 'bout salyvashun," and before anyone realized what she was going to do, she was in the midst of a most realistic but fantastically humorous rendering of the corn-field darky in a protracted meeting. Rolling her eyes till they were all "whites," she threw herself about with a few blood-curdling cries that the lost might have uttered, and then changed, before they could get their breath, to a perfect abandon of joy.

"O dem gol'en slippers,
O dem gol'en slippers,
Dem gol'en slippers I'se boun' ter w'ar
Ter walk dat gol'en street,"

she sang.

Such contortions, such writhings, such

ecstatic exclamations of "Glory! Hallelujah," with sly looks from the corner of her eyes to take in the enjoyment of her audience, while the bare, black feet flew in absurd religious frenzy.

It was impossible not to laugh, and the doctor and Miss Martha did, uncontrollably, while the girls and Donald were simply convulsed; and Cahaba was so puffed up that she was about to go all over it again, when the doctor suddenly sobered.

"No, Cahaba," he said sternly, "no more of that! It is funny to you, and, I must admit, funny to all of us, but shouting is a real religious expression to some, and we must respect it." He was talking to the young people then, rather than Cahaba, but the little darky understood enough to know that she was being rebuked, and, with a quick turn, her rusty

heels flew out of the door, — and never again did she give her 'tracted meetin' act.

"Doctor, she is the smartest thing you ever saw," declared Anne. "She came up to me one day last summer when I was reading and begged me to tell her how to do it. I laughed, but showed her letter after letter, telling her how to put them together, and, don't you know, with scraps of newspaper she picked up about the yard, she has learned to read! Every little while she would come to me and ask what some letter was, but I didn't think anything about it till one day she read a whole page out of my book for me! I've been lending her books ever since."

They were all astonished to know that the comical waif of the corn-fields could read, while Aunt Martha said: "She shall be sent away to some good school next year," and Aunt Martha's quiet words were as good as her bond always.

The doctor looked at her with kindling eyes and said, "The good work of the Shop goes on and on."

The episode was promptly forgotten in their eager return to the wedding preparations, for it was then the day before the great event. Next day, Wednesday, the girls were excused from going to school, and with a cloudless winter sky and glad cries of "Happy is the bride the sun shines on," everything was in readiness by noon. The ceremony was to be at five-thirty o'clock, the wedding supper at six, then at nine the bride and groom were to take the train away.

After the midday meal Anne asked if she might not go up to the college for Margaret. "I promised I would come for her if I could," she said, and knowing the girl's restlessness when there was no more to do, Mrs. Carter replied that she might go about four, which would give time for a leisurely walk up there and back, with plenty of time for her to dress afterwards.

So, promptly at that hour, Anne started off, and walked eagerly up the street, her mind full of the coming event. About a city block from the house, a business friend of her father, whom she knew well by sight, met her and asked if she would not hand a letter to her father which he would give her.

Anne said "certainly" with polite readiness, and he returned, "I am in a great hurry and do not want to go to his office. To-night when he comes home will be soon enough to give it to him,"

The little delay made her feel hurried, however, and she quickly decided, when he had passed on, that she would not go round by the road, but would cross the ravine, in which lay the tiny thread of water which grew into quite a swift running creek at times back of her home, and thereby shorten the way considerably, forgetting in her eagerness that mother did not think that a good way to go. She plunged at once into the little grove of trees which skirted the sidewalk, as the ravine bent around at that point too close for dwellings on that side of Main Street, and hurried gaily along, swinging the letter loosely in her hand as she went. She next tripped down the precipitous bank, crossed the thread of water with a light leap, and then up the long steep

bank on the other side she climbed, and into the road, which led directly to the college campus.

But suddenly she stood still, — where was the letter for her father? It was gone! Turning quickly, she hurried back to the ravine again, - just where did she cross it? She could not tell, and dismay at her heart, she flew back over the ground, hunting desperately at every step. Mother had impressed her many times with the importance of being very careful with anything that belonged to some one else, and a letter she had said was always a sacred trust until it could be placed in the hands of the one for whom it was intended. Father's letters were so important, too, mother said, and she had nearly died when she lost one once before! Anxiety growing every minute, she ran down the side of the deep

ravine and along the tiny thread of water which marked its base. She knew she had it when she started down the steep incline on the other side, and she had missed it as soon as she reached the road on the other side, so it must be there somewhere. But "where?" she asked eagerly at first, then wearily, and at last frantically, as the darkness of the brief winter twilight settled down, and she stumbled on up and down the steep sides and along the little stream, jumping back and forth across it, again and again, with tears wetting her cheeks at last, - till she was so tired she thought she would die! It never once occurred to her that she could give up the search and go home for help. She must find it whatever the consequences, and there was nothing of the coward about the girl. So she looked, on and on, in vain.

Meantime there was consternation at home when Margaret Larson appeared at five o'clock, shining of face, in white gown of lawn and lace and pink ribbons, but without Anne. She was met by Mrs. Carter, May and Gene, who had been anxiously waiting for them some time, with the amazed, startled inquiry, "Where is Anne?" "Why didn't she come with you?" And the bewildered girl in her evident surprise at the questions sent further dismay to their hearts even before she answered, "Why, Anne never came for me!" And then added, "She said she might not come, and that I must not wait for her after half-past four o'clock, but I did wait a little longer, then I came on without her," she ended in distressed apology.

Mrs. Carter hastened to assure her that she had done exactly right, and that no doubt Anne's absence would be soon explained. This was true, but oh, her heart was sick with fear that there could only be some sad explanation to it, — for where could the child be at such a time? She left the three girls together, forcing herself to smile cheerfully as she turned from them, then hurried to her husband.

He had been out questioning the servants and was coming in the hall door.

"Oh, John, Margaret is here, and Anne is not with her!"

It was all she could say, and he could make no reply for a moment. Then he said, "The doctor and I will go, — and find her," he ended tensely.

They started out at once.

Aunt Martha's face was white and drawn when she had to be told of the anxiety. The wedding hour was almost at hand then.

"Oh, that I should have brought you this trouble!" she cried.

"Don't think of it," said Mrs. Carter earnestly. "I feel sure it will come out all right; we simply do not understand what can be keeping the child."

Donald had come in, brave in the formal evening dress of an English youth, his hair roached back at its best, smiling and erect, only to learn the disturbing news. He was startled, then serious.

"I am going out to search for her, too," he had said at once.

Mrs. Carter looked her gratitude, and he was striding up the street in an instant.

"She was going to the college," Donald said to himself, as he hurried along, looking about as carefully as though her father and the doctor had not done the same thing a little while before, and, of course, unsuccessfully, or they would have returned with her ere this. It was quite dark as he came to the little grove of trees that skirted the sidewalk, and he turned into it straining his eyes in every direction and listening intently. Suddenly he remembered hearing Anne say that she used often to go across the ravine to school when she was in a hurry, for it cut off much of the distance, but that mother did not like to have her do it, and she didn't go that way any more.

"But she was in a hurry to-day," he reasoned, "with her mind full of that wedding, and it would be just like her to forget all about what 'mother liked,'—she is such a thoughtless, fly-a-way thing," there was a catch in his throat that surprised him, "and plunge down this ravine to get there quickly. Maybe she has fallen and broken a leg, or something."

This thought sent him flying, also, down the steep sides of the ravine, calling loudly:

"Anne, Anne, where are you?"

And a quick, over-joyed response came instantly back from the darkness, some distance up the little stream, "Oh, Donald, Donald, here I am!"

It did not take him many minutes, with both calling constantly, to reach her side.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded then, with masculine vigor.

And she, breaking down completely, could only sob while she clung to him for a minute.

"I — I was hunting," she quavered, at last, "I've got to find it!"

"Find what — your hat?" he urged, remembering her wayward hats, not seeing whether she had on one or not, and with a decided increase of vigor.

"What letter?" And young masculine patience was at its limit.

"Oh, a letter a man gave me for father! It seems to me everybody in the world must know! I lost it, and I've got to find it," she reiterated pitifully, as she had done all through the miserable search.

Then the childish, unreasoning cry went to his heart, and he struck a match instantly from the little silver case he always carried, and began what would have seemed a further unreasonable search, with a moment's reflection.

But inanimate things take queer turns sometimes, disappearing most unaccountably and reappearing again like magic. Before Donald's match was out, his foot had brushed aside a little drift of leaves and there lay the letter!

[&]quot;No, no," she faltered, tragically, "the letter!"

Such joy as surged through Anne's over-wrought heart only the young ever know, for no troubles are so poignant, — if brief, — as theirs, and no joy ever so completely sweeps everything else from the soul.

"Donald, Donald, — Oh, — I'm so glad," she cried again and again, and the weariness fled from her feet as they hurried up the steep bank and into the little grove, to be met, ere they could cross it, by her father and the doctor, who had come back, remembering the grove and the ravine.

Explanations were soon over, the letter lay in Mr. Carter's hand, and the little party went rapidly back to relieve the anxiety of those who were waiting.

The children, Miss Martha, forgetful of her bridal gown, and Mrs. Carter were at the parlor windows straining their eyes for a glimpse of Anne, or the searchers, coming up the walk, and their joy was unbounded when the happy faces came into the light which streamed from the hall.

Of course everybody gathered around Anne in the broad hallway and had to hear about the letter, — and the hurry and forgetting what mother said about not going down the ravine, — "Mother, I truly forgot," she pleaded, "or I would not have gone," and then about the discovery of the loss, and the long, miserable search, the darkness, the remorse, — mother had said letters were a sacred trust till they were delivered, — and she ought not to have gone down the ravine, she remembered too late, — and she had to find the letter!

She was too happy, then, to make it all seem as tragic, even to her, as it did in the darkness of the ravine, — and with tears quivering upon her shining eyes she exclaimed at last, "I felt just like the folks in 'tracted meetin's' that Cahaba told us about yesterday, when I hunted and hunted and couldn't find the letter, and I guess I moaned and cried just like they do, — only nobody heard me," she put in pathetically, "and then when I heard Donald's voice, I think I must have shouted like they do, — anyhow I felt like it in my heart!"

There were tears sparkling all round when she was through, and Mr. Carter put an arm about her, while the doctor said brusquely, "That is life itself, Anne,—sinning and repenting and rejoicing with tears, whether we are children or men, the learned or the ignorant cornfield darky."

And then somebody remembered the

wedding! And Anne was hurried away to be dressed. The minister was already at the Blossom Shop, wondering, doubtless, why the bridal party did not come. The doctor and Donald hurried over at once to explain to him, and then everything moved forward in an orderly way, — that is, except for a little commotion, of which, fortunately, the bridal party, having had disturbance enough, knew nothing.

This occurred in the rear of the hall, where the guests had gathered,—the baby, Mammy Sue, Uncle Sam and Cahaba, all in wedding finery. Cahaba was especially splendid; her feet adorned with shoes and stockings for the first time in her life; her dusky body swathed in purest white (which might have stood alone had occasion required), while her hair, with every woolly knob released

from its wrappings, stood erect in glorious pompadour.

This elegant Cahaba, puffed up with pardonable pride, strutted out before Mammy Sue, — only to have that august personage swoop down upon her with:

- "What's dat yer got on yer haid?"
- "A Pompolodore," replied Cahaba airily.
- "Well, I'll pomperlore you ef yer don' teck hit down dis minnit!" stormed Mammy Sue, jerking the startled guest around.
- "Pomperlore!" she continued scornfully, "Hit's nothin' but one er Miss Anne's worn-out black stockings on yer haid, wid der white toe stickin' out behin'," and, before the enraged victim could make defense, the tell-tale stocking toe received a jerk, which brought the whole thing down from its position as

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But there was no time for outraged dignity to give itself expression, — there they were, the bridal party, coming down the long flight of steps, — and the guests hurried out to the rear entrance of the Shop to be in their places when the procession entered at the front.

Slowly it passed down the hall, across the broad porch and along the walk to the Shop, the path all lit with Chinese lanterns in soft colors, entered the front door and made its stately way to the little flower-banked altar, near which waited the groom and his best man, while Mrs. Carter played with delicate touch a classic wedding march.

May and Gene entered first, in filmy white and pink with pretty flower baskets,

Anne and Margaret Larson came next, also in white and pink, then the bride, clad in the sweet old-time ashes of roses with veil and orange blossoms on her lovely white hair, — which the girls had begged should not be omitted. She leaned on the arm of Mr. Carter, who yielded possession to the doctor at the foot of the little altar.

Then a moment of sacred, solemn speech, with the old, old exchange of promise for all life's span, the girls claimed their kisses from the bride, the groom his from them, and the beautiful ceremony was over.

A delayed wedding supper followed, when Mammy Sue displayed her generalship to fine advantage, and then the good-bys were called over and over by all as the couple drove away to the station for a trip to Cuba.

CHAPTER VII

PASSING COMRADES

AFTER the wedding things settled back into the old routine. Lessons were resumed, the baby grew and thrived with each day, smiling and cooing in the most wonderful way that ever a baby did, the girls thought; mother had a new, happy light on her face, father was very busy, but had time to be supremely proud of his boy, and Mammy Sue, with a baby to care for, had come into her own once more, finding little time to grieve about her "chillun's" failings.

It was early February, with sometimes

a hint of spring in the air, which brought everybody from bed earlier in the mornings and gave a fresh zest to life. But with the renewal of life there is always the waning of life, as well, and one morning very early Uncle Sam knocked at Mr. and Mrs. Carter's door, and upon the prompt "Come," he opened it gently a bit and said in quiet apology, "I'se sorry to 'sturb you-all, — but I'm 'bleeged ter tell yer dat old King am dead."

- "Dead!" exclaimed Mrs. Carter in real distress. "What will the girls say!"
- "Yas'm, dat's what I'se thinkin' 'bout, an' dat's why I come ter 'sturb yer. I wanted yer ter know 'fore dey wuz up, kase you'd know what ter do."
- "Well, Uncle Sam, give us time to think," said Mr. Carter, "and don't let the girls hear of it till after breakfast."

"They will be heart-broken," grieved Mrs. Carter, "Anne and May will, and Gene will feel it almost as much."

"They will, indeed," sadly returned Mr. Carter. "My children have known and loved those mules since they were babies. They are the gentlest things that ever went under the name of mules! I don't know how long they have been in our family, but many years certainly. I loved them myself, as a boy, when they were young and sleek and handsome in shining harness, attached to our best carriage."

"How shall we tell them? — and how shall we manage it all?" asked Mrs. Carter anxiously.

"Masculine-like, I am hoping to put that disagreeable duty upon you," he smiled.

She smiled in return, but continued

anxiously, "But how is it all to be managed?"

- "You mean disposing of him?"
- "Yes."
- "Why, we will simply have him hauled away."
- "But the children will feel that he was their *friend*, and we must do it with consideration for them."
- "Oh, I see," he returned. "All right, you decide just what you want to have done, and I will do it to the letter," he ended warmly.

So it was finally planned that dear old King should be laid in the big wagon on a bed of cedar, that beautiful evergreen of the South, and that flowers and vines should make his coverlet. The girls were to know nothing till they came from school, and then everything would be in readiness.

When his wife spoke of flowers, Mr. Carter had exclaimed incredulously: "Flowers!"

"Certainly," returned she, smiling at him, "weren't flowers God's gift to us for sorrow, — His expression of tenderness and sympathy to a world He knew was going to be full of suffering and grief, and we imitate Him when we use them in trouble, — and this is deep trouble for the girls, — the first they have ever really known, too."

Mr. Carter promptly acquiesced at this, and Uncle Sam later carried out every instruction with sympathetic interest.

Anne and May, and Gene as well, were indeed broken-hearted when they heard the news, which was not told them until their return from school in the afternoon. May and Gene, listening with the ready

tears and quiet acceptance of childhood, went out at once with Uncle Sam, but Anne stood still beside her mother, wide-eyed and questioning, in youth's first contest with nature's unalterable facts.

"Dead! Old King dead!" she cried.

"Oh, it can't be so!"

And then eagerly, "Why, mother, I saw him yesterday grazing in the back lot!"

There was surely some mistake.

"Yes, dear, I know," said Mrs. Carter gently, "but it is true that he is gone today," pressing home the reality for youth, as maturity must.

Still wide-eyed and holding up the shield of unbelief, but faltering now, Anne cried again, "It can't be so, — we can't have him dead, mother!"

"I know it is hard," returned Mrs.

Carter, putting an arm around the girl, "but it is nature's way.

"'Let down the bars, O, death!
The tired flocks come in
Whose bleating ceases to repeat,
Whose wandering is done.'

"Our poet laureate says that is the way nature calls when living things grow weary," and the gentle voice in the tender lines broke down the unbelieving shield, and Anne sobbed with the abandon of her temperament.

When she grew quiet, the mother's voice went on: "Old King was really very old; he could not make long or hard trips any more, and we would have felt so badly to see him grow helpless and suffer. Nature is kind in all her ways, and God planned that every living thing should slip out of life when this weary, helpless time comes. We must be glad

that this going was not long delayed for King."

Then Anne and her mother followed the little girls and Uncle Sam down for a last look at their old friend, and, of course, the tears must come afresh as they saw him in that marvelous stillness.

But the bed of flowers helped much, and they listened with interest while Uncle Sam told of the spot which he had selected for King's resting place. It was a beautiful spot, which they knew well, down in the valley by the stream back of the Carter place, at the foot of a big water oak.

Suddenly Anne thought of Queen.

"What will Queen do without old King?" she cried.

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Carter, who had been asking the same question

of her own heart, "but we will be very good to her, and nature will understand how to deal with her. She is the wisest mother the world knows."

And, as it proved, nature already had her gentle hand upon old Queen.

"Mother, mother, how do we know anything about death?" asked Anne, her arms about her mother as they all walked toward the house again. Somehow she could not let go that guiding hand in this first facing of life's sternest inevitable with recognition and acceptance.

"Well, we don't know much, except that it is God's way of releasing the spirit. Neither do we know much of the new home to which the human spirit goes, but I can say with our Emily:

"'I never spoke with God
Nor visited in heaven,
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given."

She repeated the lines with a quaint brightness that made any little sermon of hers always acceptable. After a moment she softly added, "God's book tells us 'when we awake with His likeness we shall be satisfied,' isn't that enough?"

They walked slowly around the house to the front, then joined the little girls at the front piazza steps, when they saw Donald swinging down the driveway, smiling and happy, with Rex faithfully following.

As he reached the tearful, red-eyed group he stopped in amazement.

- "What on earth "
- "Oh, Donald," faltered Anne, before he could ask, "Old King is dead!"
- "Ah," he returned slowly, and rather lamely. "What is that to make such a fuss about?" was his first thought, and then Rex caught his eye, pushing an un-

derstanding nose against Anne's relaxed palm, making the boy ashamed, — and what if it had been old Rex?

"Why, that is too bad. When did it happen?" And his sympathetic interest was all the girls could ask.

Soberly they all went back to old King once more, and Donald was appreciative of the flowers, approved of the spot for burial, — and was a "jolly good mourner" with the girls, as he told a boy friend afterward. "I was genuinely sorry with them, too, — for what would I do if it had been my Rex?" he added, "and, do you know, that dog understood everything just as well as if he could talk, and you should have seen how fine he was with the girls, sticking his nose in their hands and rubbing against them with sympathy. He is the smartest dog anywhere," he ended with enthusiasm for his pet. And the bread of understanding for the boy's new friends in their sorrow was not cast on the waters in vain; it came back to him in the most unexpected way.

Uncle Sam attended to the burial in the late afternoon, and there was only a long, narrow mound at the foot of a beautiful water-oak near the swift little stream for the girls to visit, and the grown people were quietly glad that all was over.

A few days later, however, Anne burst into her mother's room, crying, "Oh, mother! Old Queen will not eat!"

She was followed by the little girls, who breathlessly added: "We have given her sugar and she won't take it!"

"We have gathered grass for her and she won't touch it!"

- "And her legs just wabble, she is so weak," Anne went on with a sob.
- "And, oh, mother, she looks at us so pitifully," wailed May.
- "It just breaks our hearts," whispered Gene, her wet face against her mother's neck.

It was a sorry task to comfort them this time, for Mrs. Carter, Mammy Sue and Uncle Sam had already exhausted their ingenuity in an effort to make the grief-stricken old mule eat. She had refused food from the moment old King had been found dead beside her. This did not surprise the older folks at first, for it is often the tribute of grief which animals pay upon the loss of a comrade, but Queen's persistent refusal of food had alarmed and distressed them.

Mrs. Carter said simply that they must keep on trying to find something she would take. So the girls ran to her stall the first thing every morning, and immediately on their return from school, with some choice thing for her, while Donald was frequently there, adding his efforts to theirs,—but it was all in vain, the dumb creature stood, day after day, only looking up beseechingly as they came about her, showing her weakness, more and more, but refusing to eat without her mate. Nothing else was thought of, and the girls almost refused to eat, themselves. It was heart-breaking indeed.

At the end of a week Uncle Sam had another early morning errand. Then it was all to go over again, but everybody was more ready for it this time, and it was easier to make the girls see how beautiful it was for Queen to get release, and for the two old comrades to go out of life together. There was tenderness and flow-

ers again, and finally a second mound at the foot of the big, spreading water-oak with its glistening foliage for almost all the year round, and shining mistletoe hidden in its branches for the bleak winter days.

Donald was with them when they went to see the last new grave, and he suggested that the oak be a tomb for the two sleepers.

"I will cut their names in the bark," he said enthusiastically, "and they will stay there many, many years."

The girls were delighted with this proposition, and watched with keen interest while his knife cleverly cut the names and dates of death.

So it was that sorrow first touched these young lives, sorrow with its trenchant influence upon the heart, its softening power, its revelation of nature's processes, and, in this instance, its arousal of the ennobling sense of kinship with the dumb things of the universe, which was never forgotten.

The spot where the two faithful old friends slept was often remembered, and they carried there the first early spring It was a mild Saturday that they went, and after decorating the mounds, the girls followed the stream on its way to the river for some distance, Uncle Sam going with them, — walking these days where they used to ride the mules. As they wandered somewhat aimlessly, they came in sight of a little, tumble-down cabin close to the stream, and a woman, of the "poor white" variety, standing in front, while, to the girls' surprise, they saw Rex lying at her feet. He rushed to them, as soon as he recognized his friends, and Anne said, as she patted his head:

"What are you doing here, old fellow?"

The dog looked at her, then turning, ran to the woman again and frisked about her in the most friendly way.

The woman looked back at the little party with something of triumph in her face, and Uncle Sam said promptly, then, though in a low voice:

"Come on, chillun, back home. Yore Ma wouldn't want you to have nothin' to do wid sech 'pore white trash,'" which was the negro way of designating the whites of that class.

They went back obediently, and the incident was completely forgotten till its remembrance was brought back most unexpectedly to Anne, and under very exciting circumstances.

CHAPTER VIII

A BEDRAGGLED SNOW

In the rapid physical development which had lately come to Anne, young womanhood seemed suddenly to have unfolded within her. She had grown more slender during the year, and the new spring skirts, which must soon be under way, would have to be much lengthened to provide for additional height and maturity. She had grown prettier, too, with the slenderness showing in the face as well as figure, and the face constantly gaining in expression, — new thoughts, new emotions leaving their imprint upon

the fresh youthfulness which gave it new beauty. A baby in the family, with its wee fingers, paints many lines of beauty in the faces which hang over it, and Anne's was no exception in the Carter household. How she loved it, and how she loved to hold it in her arms, feel its little head nestle against her, and marvel over its many cunning ways. She had no care of it, for Mammy Sue was a very jealous custodian, and the times when she held it, "all to herself," as she expressed it, were times of special privilege. But they made their impress, and there was something softer and sweeter and gentler about the girl's manner, as well as in her expression of face.

But self-consciousness had not dawned in her yet, even to the extent of interest in her personal appearance. The light brown hair was still flying in an hour after the morning toilet, and, being without curl, was wayward and angular, while little niceties of dress were not yet within her line of vision. The time would come when she would pause for these. Mrs. Carter was patiently waiting, keeping before her in the pretty things provided for her use, the ideals desired.

At present the heart was too busy unfolding, along with the physical life, to take account of small, external things. She was fast stepping out of childhood mentally, and spiritually, as well as physically, with the inevitable struggle to find herself in many ways. In the home the three girls had come to be designated as Anne and the little girls. She had seen less of them since she entered the collegiate department at school, though there was still the warmest affection for them.

Margaret Larson had become more and more the special chum, which is always a necessity for happy girlhood, and reaching out for other friends which her own individuality demanded, she was rapidly finding them. Hitherto her friendships had been the child's usual inheritance, or gift of circumstance.

She loved music devotedly, had learned to practice with more real pleasure, and was a ready warbler, with a clear, strong soprano, which her natural instincts guided into considerable delicacy of expression. She had begun lessons in vocal culture, and was fast becoming an enthusiastic student. Margaret Larson was quite a skillful pianist for her years, and the two soon began having delightful times with their music, Margaret playing the accompaniments for Anne's songs. Margaret's mother, the teacher

of art in the college, was a highly cultured woman and Margaret herself a refined, studious and most lovable girl, — altogether such a chum as Mr. and Mrs. Carter had desired for Anne.

Donald loved music, too, and played the piano with rare skill. The first time he sat down and played for her, Anne had exclaimed:

"Why, it is so funny to see a boy play the piano like you do!"

She had not thought of music as concerning boys, though, of course, there were men professors in schools, but they could never have been just ordinary boys!

"Most English fellows of the higher class learn music," Donald said simply, without ostentation, for the idea of classes of society had been familiar to him al-

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ways, and was, as a matter of course, a thing to be referred to like other facts, such as the names of one's parents or the place of birth.

Then he had walked away from the piano and stood by the window a moment, with his hands plunged into the trousers' pockets, and looked away in far remembrance.

Anne waited in a sort of instinctive sympathy.

At last he spoke:

"Mother was a great lover of music, and a believer in it for boys as well as girls. She said it trained them in delicacy of touch, accuracy and speed in mental, as well as physical movement; a sense of rhythm helpful to body, mind and spirit, — besides opening for them the door into the great world of beauty and harmony of sound, and

giving them appreciation of musical values."

It was a long speech for Donald to make, and he was evidently going over in his mind what he had often heard his mother say.

Music, therefore, was another link of interest for him with the Carters, and he was frequently with Anne and Margaret at the piano. He played classical music, altogether, and the girls were unconsciously led away from the futile, often trashy popular songs of the day to the finer, purer classics, greatly to Mrs. Carter's delight.

So the special friendships which the girl had found for herself were not interrupted at all, but rather fostered, and from them, as a center, had broadened out into quite a circle of girl friends at the school and a group of brass-buttoned

boys, friends of Donald's, which made a delightful coterie for the enjoyment of the things of youth.

About the middle of February the doctor and his wife, Aunt Martha, stopped for a few days on their return from the wedding trip, and the day after their arrival, a cloudy, chill day, Margaret and Anne were in the Carter parlor, when Anne, happening to glance out of the window, ran to it with excited exclamation.

In the midst of "Oh!" "Oh!" Margaret couldn't tell what was happening, and ran to look for herself. Then there was a duet of "Oh!" "Oh!" and a final magic cry of the South, which comes very rarely, — "Snow!"

They ran through the house with it, "Snow! It's snowing, snowing!"

May and Gene took up the cry, and the

doctor came out of the library, at last, shaking with laughter, Aunt Martha behind him.

"What on earth is all this fuss about! Snow," scornfully, "who wants to see it! Snow! Jupiter, that is what I have run away from!"

Then they fell upon him.

"Of course we want it to snow, everybody wants it to snow! And you must, too," while they laughingly tousled his hair till he cried "enough."

"We never saw a real snowstorm in all of our lives, — and we have been praying for one ever since we were born," laughed Anne.

And for the next three hours excitement ran high. The snow continued with genuine Northern vigor, white flakes came down thick and fast, and the beautiful clear crystals piled up over

lawns and trees and shrubbery in the most charming way, while the girls exclaimed, and ran from window to window, to the immense delight of the doctor in spite of scornful pretense. He and Aunt Martha soon found themselves more eager about the continuance of that snowstorm than they had ever been about the stoppage of any Northern blizzard, though they thought they had had many ardent desires along that line.

Not only was the Carter household in a state of ecstasy, but the whole town was in great excitement. Mr. Carter came home and said business was a failure with that spectacle of nature on hand, and joined the happy groups at his own windows.

As night dropped down at last, there was a beautiful, awesome sense of being folded in from all the world with a won-

derful white cover of glint and sparkle, for the sky had cleared at sunset and the moon shone with a brilliance that the children thought had never been seen before, and oh, the marvelous stillness!

Margaret Larson was there; of course she did not dream it was going to snow but a wee bit when it began, and then she couldn't go, and Mrs. Carter thought her mother would understand, while the girls were delighted that she was stormbound.

They are their supper in the greatest glee, and then the doctor challenged them to a snow-ball fight.

It was hilariously accepted, and Mrs. Carter saw that they were well bundled with over-shoes all round, and out they plunged for the rear yard where there was open space, into the greatest fun they had ever had, they declared; the doctor

renewed the sport of his youth as he had not done since he reached his twenties, while Aunt Martha renewed hers by looking on.

"Think of snow-balling," he cried, "in the land of the chinkapin, crackling bread and 'possum!"

Suddenly, as the white balls went flying amid laughing screams, there came a queer sound of jingling bells up the street, and then they caught glimpses through the shrubbery in the moonlight of a queer thing moving along the road with two horses prancing.

It stopped at their gate, and then the jingling bells went like mad, while they recognized Donald's tones in loud "Hellos!"

The four girls flew inside and out to the front porch, pell mell, the doctor puffing behind, and there was Donald plowing up the front walk as fast as he could through the mass of white which filled it.

"I've got a sleigh," he cried, "Come, get in, girls!"

A chorus of "Ohs" greeted that, and then,—"Where did you get it?" in astonished unbelief.

"Made it!" was the gaily laconic reply.

"Made it!" they echoed.

"Yes!" with boyish triumph, "Tom Barclay and I worked all afternoon over it, when we saw there was going to be a real snow, and I found nobody had any sleighs about here. We made it out of a big goods-box, — and it's tiptop! Come for a ride, girls, with Tom and me," he ended, and then, looking at the two little girls, standing in eager excitement, he added, "May and Gene first, please, —

if I may choose," with a politeness which was always ready.

The two danced in glee, but looked up at their father for permission.

"Doctor, you or Mr. Carter come along too, — Tom will give you his place, I am sure, — and see that everything is all right, please. Our horses are the gentlest things living, you know," he added.

"You go, doctor," said Mr. Carter, laughing, "then you can mend any broken bones that may need your care."

"All right," cried the doctor, with the high spirit of youth still in his blood, and so the three started off with Donald in the big goods-box-sleigh, which was roomy enough for them all, having a little seat across the front and a broad one at the back, the box being cut down at the sides in regulation slope, and with

barrel staves in double rows underneath for runners.

The dinner bells jingled again merrily as they went up the long narrow street, while Anne and Margaret with Tom Barclay waited eagerly, but willingly, for their turn, which was not a great while in coming.

May and Gene were ecstatic over the ride on their return, the doctor reported that the sleigh was all right and the horses gentle as dogs, resigned his place to Tom again and Mr. Carter allowed the two older girls to go alone with the boys, with the understanding that after a short ride, Margaret would be put down at the cottage on the college campus, where she and her mother made their home.

Such a jolly ride they had; life had never given them anything so fine, they thought, in the appeal of the unusual for youth; and when they parted from Margaret, it was with the agreement to have another ride together early in the morning, before the snow should have a chance to depart. They were skeptical of such glory remaining long a thing of earth, — and well they might be.

Anne was up early in anticipation, for mother had given her consent to the ride in the morning, but she must be back by ten for a little special task, as well as for the regular duties.

"Oh, mother, of course I will," she had promised.

Everybody else was promptly up that wonderful morning, also, with the sun on a gleaming white-covered earth for the first time in the memory of many, and the older folks could only recall one or two such storms in all their lives.

By eight o'clock the discordant, but energetic dinner bells were jingling out at the front gate again, and everybody was seeing Anne off for the two-hour frolic.

"Be sure to remember, dear," said her mother, the last thing, "to be back by ten o'clock."

"I will," she called, as she hurried down the steps.

Then they were off up the street, Anne and the two boys, Donald and Tom, the horses cantering with spirit, hands waving and bells ringing, — each being supplied with a big bell, this time, and people coming from their doors all along the way, and waving and laughing as they saw the strange outfit pass.

Margaret was waiting for them at her door all ready to go, her cheeks glowing and auburn curls dancing, while her mother saw them off with gentle admonitions as to care.

"I will not be a bit reckless, Mrs. Larson," said Donald soberly, who was the driver. "I will bring her back safely."

And there was something substantial and fine about the young English boy that was always confidence-inspiring.

A lovely trip they had, of course, calling a minute upon numerous friends, singing and laughing, as they went upon the quieter streets.

Meantime, the sun was growing warm with astonishing rapidity, and when they were at the far end of the town, Donald began to notice that the barrel staves scraped considerably and the snow was very soft. He turned and hurried as much as possible, while they bumped along still gaily, till Margaret was set

down at her home and Tom was dropped in town. Then Donald looked a little dubiously at the roadbed, which was showing very bare in places.

"My word, Anne," he said, "I believe we are going to have a rough time getting home. I did not dream snow could go like this! It will be safe all right, but hard riding with no springs, — and awfully slow."

He took out his watch, as he said this, and exclaimed, "Eleven o'clock!"

"Eleven o'clock!" echoed Anne in dismay, then in consternation, — "I promised mother I would be back at ten!"

"Why didn't you tell me," he exclaimed with prompt frankness, "and I would have had you there on time. I did not know any promises had been given, or we would not have gone so far."

"Mother says promises are sacred bonds," said Anne, miserably. "She is so particular when we have given our word about anything."

There was silence again in the little sleigh, and then Donald said slowly: "My mother said so too, — and from a little chap she taught me to keep my word."

The sun was suddenly hot, the white world was bedraggled, and they scraped along down the street forlornly.

The ride went on in silence till the girl at last broke it with the characteristic lament:

"Here I am, growing up some more, and disturbing everybody, — I've even spoiled the snow."

And Donald, looking into her honest, contrite face, laughed, and gave her a

boyish, kindly, "Oh, you're a jolly good sort."

At home she ran up the walk, as Donald drove away, and found the doctor and his wife with her mother standing at the front door, looking out at the rapidly vanishing snow.

"Mother, mother! I forgot! I truly did! Please forgive me!" And, without waiting for reply, plunged on in apology to the guests. "Doctor, Aunt Martha, what ought to be done to me? Please say something dreadful, for I ought not to be doing wrong things when you are here, especially."

"Well, well," said the doctor, "what is it, we don't know a thing about it."

"Dearest mother, she never tells on me! I promised to come home at ten, and I didn't!" And there was no pretense in her contrition. Anne never did things half-heartedly.

The doctor was especially fond of the girl, he understood her tempestuous, warm nature, and pulling at his white forelock in energetic desire to help her out, he said, "Mother, let me fix the penalty this time. You know snow doesn't come very often, — and belongs to the North anyway."

"Certainly," was Mrs. Carter's prompt reply, for penalties were not at all to her liking,—and nobody, except the doctor and Anne, knew what the penalty in this case was, but it played a real part in the girl's growing up, and incidentally bound the two closer than ever in heart, with a result that told vitally in the girl's future.

CHAPTER IX

ANNE INDIGNANT

IT was the last of February when the hyacinths, narcissus and violets made the borders of the flower-beds beautiful with dainty color, sweet with delicate fragrance, and the doctor and his wife had gone North. The spring-like air brought the children to the front porch to sit. May and Gene had their book, reading, with the sun lighting their bare heads, when Anne came rushing out.

"Have either of you seen my pocket knife?" she demanded breathlessly. "I've looked everywhere and can't find it."

"No," affirmed both little girls, with

quick energy. It was a familiar form of question.

"I never saw anything like it," continued Anne, warmly. "I'm sure I had it last night. Somebody—" and then she caught herself, for she knew how often in the past she had been sure that "somebody" had taken this or that, only to find, with much mortification later, that the article was simply in some unexpected place where she, herself, had carelessly left it.

Gene looked thoughtful a moment,—which was a familiar attitude for her when Anne was looking up strayed belongings,—and it was an attitude the older girl had come to expect.

"Anne, — why, Anne, didn't you and Margaret have it out under the hedge yesterday afternoon when you were playing mumbly-peg there?"

"Oh, we did," cried Anne joyfully, and went flying down the steps to search under the tall mock orange hedge which lined the front fence.

On she skipped down the long walk, her hair wind-blown, her cheeks rosy and her eyes full of the happiness of living. She turned from the walk by the hedge, and stooping looked carefully along for the little knife, but it did not come to light readily. Up and down she went, stooping and looking, when suddenly she heard quick military steps, and knew some of the college boys were coming along. She crouched lower instinctively that they might not see her and waited noiselessly, but with no thought of eavesdropping. She heard a voice, however, a voice she did not recognize and she gave no heed to the words. But the quick steps fell closer, and another voice came to her on the breeze that she knew. It was Donald's. She did not heed what he was saying either, she was simply intent on keeping out of sight, but just as the steps passed her, she caught distinctly in his strong, round tones with the broad vowels and rolling r, the end of a sentence:

"But Anne is such a frowze!"

There was no scorn in the tones, it was rather a brotherly, chiding admission, but the girl caught nothing save the meaning of his appalling statement,—and that came like a thunder-bolt from a clear sky.

She sat there as the quick steps died away, in crouched rigidity. It was broken at last with a slow indrawn sob. Then she searched on mechanically till the little knife was found, and rising went slowly down the hedge and around

the walk to the shop, in order to avoid meeting the little girls, with the instinctive impulse of a hurt thing. Once there, she threw herself down on the bamboo settee, buried her head in its soft cushions and wept, the first real bitter tears of her young life.

When the passion of grief and dismay had passed, she went into the lavatory of the shop and surveyed herself in its little mirror.

Poor child, it was a sorry time for searching inspection, but, like her elders in sorrow and anger, she had no sense of justice, even to herself, and turning away, terror-stricken at the sight, she exclaimed in her heart:

"I am a frowze! Donald is right, —but he was mean to say it!"

And then, as she strode out the rear door, sullen resentment brought out the old, "I don't care," which has wrecked many a life.

She walked back to the strip of woods at the rear of the place, skirting the little stream which first trickled into sight and sound in the deep ravine where she had made such desperate search for the letter some weeks before, and which flowed past the resting-place of old King and Queen.

She passed the observant Cahaba, on her way, with head up-lifted, — but a mournful "M-m-m-m-m," something between a moan and a whine, following her, told that the bravery was a failure.

She walked in the woods till the wind had dried her cheeks, soothed her swollen eyelids and quieted her spirit into a sullen stillness, — the warm-hearted, open-natured Anne, seared by the first sweep of blighting passion!

With the hardness of a young stoic on her face, she thought no one would notice anything unusual about her, but, like the discerning Cahaba, every one felt instantly "something wrong," though they did not take the little darky's expressive way of making it known. Mrs. Carter, with one quick glance, caught her breath in undefinable anxiety. What had happened now? The little girls asked frankly, "What's the matter with you, Anne?" only to be curtly told, in a way altogether new to them, "Nothing."

Mr. Carter, at the supper-table, looked at his daughter searchingly, then, with silent inquiry turned to his wife, but she was looking upon her plate, and there was no opportunity for exchange between them until they went to their room at bedtime. 198

"I haven't the least idea," returned his wife earnestly. "I noticed it when she came in from a walk this afternoon. She was her own happy, care-free self an hour or so before."

He turned in sudden alarm at this: "Surely the child is not going to begin hiding things, — we have always borne patiently with her heedlessness, because she was so open-hearted and frank about everything, and so repentant over every lapse."

"I don't think she has suddenly become transformed in character, John," his wife said, smiling. Then, to check his increasing severity, she added, "Oh, growing up is so hard, dear! There is so much to learn and suffer in youth. —

all at one time. Children need sympathy, love, — always!"

And looking into her tender face and remembering how wisely she had guided the children thus far, he took her cheeks in his hands and said, "I can trust you. You will find out the trouble, and do just what is best."

With glad tears in her eyes she pleaded, "But you must not be in a hurry. I am going to wait till she is ready to tell me, — giving her constant opportunity, of course."

Anne was not herself for days, she spent more time in her room than she had ever been known to do, and one afternoon Donald stopped on the porch with the two little girls, but she did not go down.

"Ah," exclaimed Mrs. Carter to herself, in real relief, as she saw Donald come and go, and no move from Anne, "Clue number one!"

He came and went several times and Anne was either not there, or invisible, while she continued most unlike herself. The piano was scarcely heard and never a song note.

It was just at this time that the midyear declamation of the boys' school was on. It had been postponed a month on account of some repairs in their chapel, and had been talked of with enthusiasm for weeks. Donald, who was a sophomore, was to take part in a debate, and Anne, being now in the collegiate department at her school, was to go for the first time. Such anticipation, such planning there had been! But all this had subsided with the girl's changed personality, and Donald came no more to talk it over, while she never once brought Margaret home with her during those few sad, strange days.

At first Anne decided she would not go to the old thing! Then the proud blood within her proclaimed that she would! And from the moment of this decision a wild mood possessed her. She was the gayest of the gay, she pirouetted with the broom upon her palm once more as she "cleaned up,"—while Mammy Sue moaned again, and Uncle Sam got out of her way with alacrity.

She sang her gayest songs, — some ragtime atrocities that the household had never heard. There were two days of this, while Mrs. Carter listened with bated breath, — and waited.

Then the evening of the speaking was at hand. Anne had been over at the college with one of her teachers and a group of girls to assist the boys in decorating their chapel, for the two schools were as brother and sister. She was perfectly irrepressible there, and the teacher who chaperoned them had often to say admonishingly, "Anne, Anne!"

"Oh, dear, Miss Strother," she cried gaily in return, "I'm just growing up, you know, and I can't keep still!"

Her merry feet ran here and there as wreathes were made and hung, long ropes of evergreen were festooned about the walls and pillars, and she was so gay and funny the whole time that the young folks adored her more than ever.

As for Donald, he looked on, enjoying her mood with the rest, but puzzled that his first friend of the new world seemed, somehow, not to see him.

By night the gaiety had completely spent itself, and when she went up to her room to dress, a little sullen, defiant gleam burned in her grey-blue eyes.

"Donald thought she was 'a frowze,'—she would be one"—with the secret thought that she would make him ashamed of her at the speaking, for the boys knew she was his friend. So, she did not go near the mirror in dressing, never touched her hair, which was flying hopelessly with the afternoon's gaiety, and only hardened her heart the more as she fastened about her throat the locket with its two young faces.

It was understood that her father was to take her to the entertainment, and she came to tea dressed for the evening.

Mrs. Carter caught her breath, May and Gene stared, while Mr. Carter set his lips in stern lines as she took her seat at the table. His eye caught the gleaming keep-sake at the girl's throat.

"Anne," he said quietly, "you will please return to your room, put the locket and chain in its case, and bring it back to me. The time has not yet come for you to wear it, I see."

She gave him one startled flash, then rose and walked from the room.

Up-stairs, she slowly unclasped the chain,—handled the locket a moment,—but she would not look at the youthful mother-face within, though something from the depths of her heart urged and pleaded. Her pride was yet too high. She could not, however, put aside a sweet rebuking vision of merry grey-blue eyes, so like her own, which memory clearly outlined.

And she hesitated as it followed her to the door, till, — finally turning, she went back to her dresser, took down her hair and mechanically rearranged it. It had no grace of line at last, but it was no longer noticeably dishevelled, and she went slowly down-stairs, laid the little case in her father's hand and took her place again at the table.

Mr. and Mrs. Carter chatted during the meal as though nothing had happened, while Anne said nothing, and May and Gene were very quiet.

Oh, how the girl wished she need not go that night, but her pride was not yet ready to capitulate, and she went on at last, miserably, with her father, while little was said by either during the short walk to the college.

Everything was gaiety there; brassbuttoned students hurried hither and thither, the girls from their college fluttered in with pretty white dresses and pink ribbons.

Anne could not help catching the spirit

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The debate waxed hot over the question as to which was the greater, Washington or Lee, — at a time, too, when there could be no question as to that in the South, — and Donald was for Washington!

Deep down in Anne's heart was a throb of joy when the youth with splendid carriage, uplifted head and glowing eyes stepped forward to receive the sophomore declamation prize, but it only made her feel the more desolate when she was at home once more, and the old ugly thoughts came trooping back, dispiritedly now.

The next afternoon the girl walked in from school and went in the pantry to a tea cake jar which was always at the children's disposal for after-school lunch. She stood there a moment, eating, though it was her usual custom to go flying out, cake in hand. But there was nowhere she cared to go, now, and so she stood there, aimlessly, while she ate.

A high window looked on the broad, back porch; it was open, and she soon heard Cahaba, though she could not see her, talking in low tones to Polly, who was taking an airing there, hanging in her cage from a long chain.

Anne listened idly, till, catching a word or two, she bent eagerly toward the window and listened intently. Then she flew from the room in a perfect fury.

The words she had caught, and which Cahaba was trying to teach Polly, were: "Anne's lost her sweetheart! Anne's lost her sweetheart!"

She descended upon the incorrigible little darky like a young tornado.

"You stop that this minute, Cahaba!" she cried chokingly.

And Cahaba, unable to flee, as she usually did when reprimanded, whimpered:

"I wa'n't doin' nothin', — jes' projectin' wid Polly, dat wuz all," she ended lamely. She knew very well she was really in mischief, for hadn't she peered in every direction, to see if any one were in hearing, when she began her task of instructing Polly?

This brought a sudden climax to Anne's mood, and it spent itself in the full sweep of angry passion upon the little darky. Without a word more, she turned quickly from the dusky culprit and went miserably in the house, — thereby administering the greatest punishment possible to that small, ignorant sinner. There was weeping and wailing, like unto that of

the convicted sinners of her portrayal, in the stuffy darkness beneath her "mammy's" bed for hours that ill-fated, sunny, southern afternoon.

CHAPTER X

GLIMPSES INTO WOMANHOOD

As for Anne, she went slowly up the long flight of stairs toward her room in a state of collapsed misery, and saw her mother's tender face waiting at the top; then, finishing the flight with a quick sob, she buried her head against the kind shoulder.

"All right, dear," Mrs. Carter said, just as if she had spoken, "we will go into my room and you can tell me all about it. Mammy Sue has baby out for the air, — has just gone, May and Gene are playing croquet, and we will have everything to ourselves."

She seated herself in a small, low rocker and Anne fell at her feet, with the miserable face plunged, for a while, in mother's lap, and a loving hand stroking the tousled head.

After a bit, the whole story came out, and Mrs. Carter listened with grave, sympathetic attention from the account of Donald's remark to "that mean Cahaba's" wicked attempt at teaching Polly. They both managed to smile a little over that last, and Mrs. Carter said condoningly, "She is a born tease, but there is really nothing wicked about her, — and we must remember how little opportunity she has had in life."

"I know," said Anne, and was glad to remember that she, herself, did nothing wicked to the little darky in retaliation.

"But, mother, don't you think Donald

was mean to say that about me to another boy, — if it was true?"

Mrs. Carter thought a moment, the young English boy's fine face and gentlemanly manner coming before her. Youth must make some errors, she thought, and felt moved to defend him.

"It depends upon the way he said it, dear. Was it in a scornful, ugly tone?"

Anne thought a moment also, then she replied honestly, "No,—it was as though he was talking of a little child," and she looked surprised at the remembrance, but not altogether pleased.

"Just as I guessed," returned Mrs. Carter, adding brightly, "and I am so glad you are a child still with so much time to learn the many lessons of life which make for happiness. And you have learned so much since you had really a chance," she went on warmly.

- "Oh, mother, do you really think I have learned anything?"
- "Indeed, you have. You are taking very good care of your room and your clothing now; I notice a great change in that."
- "Well, you know, I can see that, and when things are in disorder I know, and I put them straight, and it is so much more comfortable that way. But truly, mother, I forget all about the mirror after I dress in the morning, I do look in it now to fix my hair, and I do do it better, don't I?" she begged in uncertain eagerness.
- "Yes, indeed," responded Mrs. Carter warmly.

Then they looked at one another and both laughed a little.

"After that, though, I forget all about how I look, — and when I went to see, after Donald said that, I was an awful frowse, — just as he said," the girl confessed in a whisper.

"One step at a time, — that is the way we go, you know. You arrange your hair well in the mornings now, the next lesson will be, learning to think of your appearance through the day.

"You remember that we talked about the universe when we made our first family plans. Well, I love to think about woman's part in this big universe. Femininity is a wonderful strain in it everywhere, with its delicacy, its sagacity, its beauty, its motherhood,—entirely distinct from the masculine counterpart of strength, prowess, daring and guardianship, yet both together making the perfect whole God intended. But I feel a bigger thrill at the closer thought of this femininity in human kind with its sur-

vival of the fittest from all lesser life, its complex and marvellous possibilities.

"And from this high-flown discourse," the mother went on, smiling with bright contagion, "we drop right down to you and me!

"Do you know, little girl, that besides making a beautiful and orderly dwelling place for her loved ones and doing many other important and wonderful things along different lines, I think it is the duty of a woman to be as attractive as she can be? It adds immeasurably to the sweetness and charm of the home, and men have a right to expect it of their mothers and wives and daughters. But it is an art to be learned, just like the lessons at school, your music or your drawing, and, equally with the others, it is to mold you into a lovely womanhood. You

have come to know that all the school courses require constant plodding; the learning how to be beautiful to look upon, as well as beautiful within, requires the same careful study and patience. It is worth while, dearest, though," she ended tenderly, "we must blossom within and without."

Anne, looking into the sweet, womanly face, and remembering how carefully and attractively she was always dressed, felt the truth of it all, while deep down in her own heart was the latent womanliness which confirmed it.

Going back to Donald in her thought, Mrs. Carter then said, "I think English women are more careful in many things than we of America. We are heedless spendthrifts. We buy extravagantly, throw things about carelessly, and soon our handsome possessions are gone. "Don't you remember how Donald told us one day about his mother's laces and jewels, — not as something costly and fine, but as something precious, carefully tended and handed down by generation after generation of mothers and daughters, till they have gathered to themselves the most sacred associations of birth and debut, marriage and stately functions, which no amount of money could purchase, and no careless hand would dare desecrate?"

"I remember," said Anne, softly, far away dreams in her grey-blue eyes overcoming a first flash of regret for the little locket with the youthful faces.

There was silence awhile, then the girl said with a quiver of the lip, which she could not control:

"Mother, I think Donald admires Margaret Larson very much."

"I don't doubt it," returned Mrs. Carter promptly, "Margaret is a wonderfully attractive girl. Her auburn curls are grace itself, her skin the fairest I ever saw, I think, and her ways are so innocent and childlike, combined with a little womanly dignity that is really adorable,—I don't see how any one could help admiring Margaret."

Cruel indeed it seemed to array all these charms for Anne's compelled admission.

The girl's lips tightened.

"Now, Anne, dear," the mother went on in her most winning way, ignoring the tightened lip, "You know how Gene and I have loved Emily Dickinson, our poet laureate, — I think she has a poem for every mood of a woman's heart, almost, and I want to give you one of the sweetest she ever wrote. It is this, — no title, of course, Emily did not deal much in titles, her lays just bubbled out with no flourish of trumpets:

"'Have you got a brook in your little heart, Where bashful flowers blow, And blushing birds go down to drink, And shadows tremble so?'"

She paused while they looked into each other's eyes.

Then the woman pressed the girl's hands in her own, and said softly:

"Donald uncovered the little brook for you, — the little brook which grows finally into a woman's love, — did he not, dear?"

Anne buried her burning face in her mother's lap.

The gentle fingers passed lightly over the rumpled hair again, and then the sweet, motherly voice went on:

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- "'And nobody knows, so still it flows,
 That any brook is there;
 And yet your little draught of life
 Is daily drunken there.'
- "'Nobody knows,'—till some dear knight comes along and uncovers it,—then it is nothing to be ashamed of,—but we must not be foolish about it, instead it must be, oh, so carefully guarded and tended! For listen to the next verse" (and by this time Anne was sitting up, drinking in eagerly, unabashed, all she was saying):
- "'Then look out for the little brook in March, When the rivers overflow,
 And the snows come hurrying from the hills,
 And the bridges often go."

She gave the little verse in the sprightliest, most taking way, and Anne waited breathlessly for the interpretation.

"March is the youth of life, when the stream is so tiny. Then it must be kept carefully in its banks, or it will run out, here and there, before it is strong enough to know what direction to take, and fritter itself away, till there will never be a strong, fine stream as there should have been. We must not too early decide that our woman's heart should imbed itself here or there, but remember that the little stream of love is very small, though very real in youth, — for it is 'the little draught of life,' even then, but we must guard and keep it within the banks of our control till it has grown swift and strong and sure with our growth.

"Do not be too quick to think that your woman's love should go to Donald. You are too young for such decisions," she spoke with tender directness at last. "Your father and I don't want your girl-hood to hurry past, dear; it is the most beautiful time of life, — let it have its

full quota of the years — don't crowd it out with the things of maturity."

"Oh, mother, I know I would be foolish to think I was in love with Donald—and it would spoil everything," Anne cried earnestly, "for I have liked him so much," ending in the old frank way.

"Of course you have, — and do and will," agreed Mrs. Carter, heartily.

Then, — "Now, let's think of those other two lines of that verse, 'And the snows come hurrying from the hills,'— when this little brook of a woman's love goes out while it is not strong and sure, or takes the wrong direction, then the chilling snows come down sometimes and blight it forever."

They waited a moment in silence over that, then Mrs. Carter went on quoting: "'And the bridges often go,'—the little bridges of other types of affection which cross it and broaden and beautify and enrich our lives. There is one small bridge that was already in danger of being swept away for you,—that beautiful little structure of love for Margaret,—" and the crimson face was hidden again. "Jealousy, coldness and discontent sweep away many beautiful bridges that span our woman's love, if we do not guard its banks closely," she ended quietly.

- "And now comes the last verse," she said, after a moment, "and it follows as a part of the third:
 - "'And later, in August it may be, When the meadows parching lie, Beware, lest this little brook of life Some burning noon go dry.'"

This was quoted slowly, almost in a whisper.

"With the little brook unguarded, misdirected, wasted hither and thither, in

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the noon of life when we are thirsty for it, and the heart cries for the bashful flowers and the warbling birds, there is no brook and no flowers and no birds," she ended softly.

They did not speak for some minutes, but sat, the woman's warm, steady hands clasping the girl's, — and then the mother said with gentle briskness:

"Why, it is almost tea time, — and there is Mammy Sue with baby, — bless his little heart!"

Anne kissed her clingingly, stopped to caress baby as she had not for days past, and then hurried to her room over a new threshold of life into the delicate realm of a woman's opening heart.

CHAPTER XI

DONALD IN TROUBLE

In the next two or three weeks that followed, Anne scarcely saw Donald. He had felt that something was wrong, not only on account of the times when he was there and did not see her, but because of the queer, constrained way she looked and acted when he did see her.

"She's humpy about something, I suppose," he had said to himself, with the nonchalance of masculine youth, and found abundant interest elsewhere; while Anne, being a wholesome, healthful girl, did likewise. Besides, the talk with her

mother had been like the opening of a vista whereby she looked beyond the daily routine upon a new and beautiful panorama of life. Not that she was entirely made over by any means, — she was still in many ways her careless self, but she had new ideals and the little daily personal duties, the lessons in personal care and in home-making had taken on a fresh significance. She did want to be an attractive woman some day, — and yes, she was willing to work for it, just as she was working at school with her books, her music and drawing. And through these, as her mother said, she had already discovered that proficiency in anything involved labor. With care and growing skill she gave little touches to her hair that transformed her face, while daintiness and tasteful adjustment were apparent in all her toilet.

This quickened interest in all her daily routine occupied the girl's mind chiefly for a time, though, of course, she did not fail to think of Donald, - and to observe him walking with Margaret Larson one afternoon! But she bore this with astonishingly good grace and continued to love Margaret with all the warm-heartedness of old. Which was the most sensible thing in the world to do, for Margaret, wholly sweet and pure in heart, always thought of Donald as "Anne's friend," and at the very moment Anne saw them together she was telling him in her sweet, vivacious way that Anne was the dearest, best girl in all the world, and that she loved her better than anybody except her mother, and always would!

Of course Margaret did not know there had been any trouble between Anne and Donald, — for after that talk with

mother, it did not seem to the girl a thing to tell about.

At last there came a warm March morning when Donald was at the door before breakfast was over. He begged to see Mr. Carter at once, and the girls heard him through the open dining-room door, talking earnestly in a strained, unnatural way. As they left the room, which they soon did, finishing breakfast rapidly under the sense of something unusual going on, their father called to them:

"Anne, — May, — Gene, did any of you happen to see Rex any time last night?"

"No," they all answered, adding anxiously, "Is he lost?"

"No," returned Donald, and looking into his face they saw it was white and strained.

"Rex has gotten into trouble," said Mr. Carter, quickly and kindly, "but I hope we can soon straighten it all out. Somebody has accused him of killing a few sheep last night."

Then turning to Donald he went on with his questions.

"And you have tried in every direction to find out where he was last night?"

"Yes," returned Donald, "I have been up since five, going every minute,—the man Martin is sheriff, you know, and thought he could take everything into his own hands, wanted to kill Rex at once, came over to do it,—but grandfather wouldn't let him,—just made him agree to a trial, for the fellow is a coward, and I never saw grandfather so furious,—" and his heart was cheered with the recollection. "Martin had a grudge against grandfather, in the first place,

because grandfather is a successful farmer, and Martin is a shiftless rascal!" the boy ended bitterly.

"And you got no clue at all as to where the dog was?" Mr. Carter went on, returning to the evidence.

"No, sir, — except," the boy added reluctantly, "one man is willing to swear that he saw him going in the direction of this man's farm between eight and nine o'clock."

Mr. Carter did not say, "That looks bad," but he thought it.

And then the most damaging thing of all was wrung from Donald's white lips, by his own necessity: "And, and, blood was on his breast, Mr. Carter."

There was utter silence, even the girls understanding that this was almost hopeless.

"But," said Donald, lifting his head

defiantly, "I know Rex did not do it! I have asked him, — and he would not lie to me!"

There was a break in the brave voice at the end of this astounding statement, but the boy looked unflinchingly at the lawyer in the firmness of his conviction.

The girls turned away with starting tears, and Mr. Carter laid a kind hand on the boy's shoulder. "I will do the very best I can, — and we will not give up till we must. You say Martin insists on the trial in court this morning, — well, we will be there at eleven," and he took out his watch, "that is three hours and a half from now, and meantime we will not leave a stone unturned. Of course there is no fairness in such a forced trial, and we need not expect justice or equity anywhere in this thing, I am afraid, for since the reconstruction period in the

South there is complete apathy as to political office among the best people, especially in our small towns, and court trials are often irregular and sometimes a farce for men — for a dog there will be a poor chance, I fear. Martin, as sheriff, is in 'the ring' — but we will do the best we can."

The boy grasped his hand like a young tiger, but could not say a word, and Mr. Carter, without another thought of breakfast, went with him to unearth what facts they might in Rex's favor.

This proved a thoroughly dispiriting task. Mr. Carter began inquiry among the Thornton servants, only to find them discouragingly reticent. Then he, Mr. Thornton and Donald went with a fine two-horse team out upon the road, trying to discover some one who could say definitely where the dog had been the night

before. Eleven o'clock was at hand all too soon, and nothing had been accomplished beyond the establishment of the dog's previous good character, to which every one except Mr. Martin was ready to testify. There was nothing to do but take the dog into the jersey wagon and go to court. Mr. Martin was perfectly merciless, and they all knew there was no hope, even of delay. If the dog were found guilty, he would be executed at once.

Almost broken-hearted, Donald entered the courtroom with his grandfather and Mr. Carter, leading Rex by a chain. With his young lips set in hard lines he turned the beautiful collie into the prisoner's box, for Mr. Carter felt that the dog's fine presence was going to be his best defense.

The magistrate promptly began the

taking of testimony, and Mr. Martin told how he had suspected the dog from the very first, for he always considered him a sneaking cur. Donald's eyes blazed at this, and the judge, with the appreciative gaze of an ardent dog-lover fixed on the prisoner, interrupted, telling the witness to confine himself to facts of which he had actual knowledge, — that the dog should have as fair and unprejudiced a trial as any other prisoner at the bar of justice!

Then Mr. Martin continued, scowling unpleasantly, surprised at his colleague's attitude, and told how he went at once to the Thornton place and found blood on the dog's breast, which, to his mind, was all the proof needed. "The boy saw it, too, and he can't deny it," he ended threateningly.

The Thornton servants followed, and

acknowledged sorrowfully that, although out late sometimes during the last week, the dog had failed to meet them, as was his custom when they came home, and nobody had heard him barking recently at night. Questioned as to where the dog had probably been staying nights during that time, they couldn't say. Then Mr. Martin produced a positive witness, a man, a stranger to the Thorntons and Mr. Carter, who testified that he could identify the dog positively and that he had met him the night before going toward Mr. Martin's place.

- "Are you sure this was the dog?" persisted the judge.
- "Yes, sir," replied the man, "For there ain't no other dog 'round here like him."

Which was all too true.

"You can take your oath on that, can

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you?" still persisted the judge, — for he remembered the beloved dogs of his youth, — and the boy's young face with controlled agony stamped upon it, was making strong appeal to his callous heart.

The man said "Yes," positively.

And next morning blood had been found on the dog's breast while sheep lay dead on the farm to which he was seen going!

The room was very still while all this was being brought out, and the fine dog sat facing the court, his clear eyes full of perplexed and wistful appeal. It hardly seemed worth while to attempt a defense. However, Mr. Carter, determined to leave nothing undone, brought forward his witnesses to testify to the dog's good character.

This was done heartily, but hopelessly, by all who knew Rex, except Mr. Mar-

tin. Then the judge looked with real regret over at the dog, for there was little question as to what must be done,—when, suddenly, there was the sound of hurrying feet at the courtroom door!

The hurrying feet were those of Anne Carter, Cahaba and a strange woman of the "poor white" class.

CHAPTER XII

ANNE TO THE RESCUE

ANNE, May and Gene had gone to school as usual, — because mother said that was best, — but their hearts were in a sad tumult over the fate of Rex. They loved him almost as though he had been their own dog, and they knew well how Donald's heart was bound up in him. Why, he had brought the dear fellow across the ocean from his English home, — and Rex had known and loved Donald's mother, as Donald had softly told Anne one day.

None of the three could study, the pre-

siding teacher and their friends in the school had been told of the trouble, and the very air of the chapel was heavy with sorrow and suspense.

Anne sat with her head in her hands,
— a position not allowed under ordinary
circumstances, — and she was thinking,
thinking desperately. Suddenly, by the
very force of urgent spiritual strain,
probably, she remembered the poor
white woman they had seen one day
when they had taken a walk far down the
stream after a visit to King and Queen's
resting-place, — and how Rex had run to
her like an old friend.

Maybe the dog was there the night before!

Her eyes grew big with excitement; she dropped her arms, lifted her head, and then sped out of the schoolroom door, without a thought of where she was, or the necessity of getting permission before one even left her seat.

The teacher failed to notice as Anne rose from her seat, but saw the girl rush from the door, and as quickly as she recovered from her amazement, sent Margaret out after the fleeing figure, fearing she had suddenly been taken ill.

But Anne had already sped down the long front walk, bare-headed, and single-minded. She was going to that woman, fast as she could get there, and ask her about Rex! Down the street she went, seeing, heeding no one till finally she burst in upon her mother.

"Mother, mother," she panted, "I think a poor white woman living down in the creek bottom knows something about Rex! I'm going after her!"

"What are you talking about, Anne?" cried her mother.

"Oh, I can't tell you, — I must go get her!"

Mrs. Carter, looking at the excited, determined face, and knowing there was indeed no time to lose if Anne had any clue, cried, as the girl was disappearing again, "Take Uncle Sam with you, — don't go alone!"

And as the flying feet rushed out the back doorway there was a frantic cry of,

— "Uncle Sam! Uncle Sam!"

But no response came, and seeing Cahaba, the girl cried, "Oh, come with me, Cahaba!"

The little darky flew at her bidding, for she loved "Miss Anne" devotedly, and to go with her anywhere was as near heaven as she ever expected to get.

"What am der matter, Miss Anne?" she begged, and Anne, slackening a little, for she had to breathe, replied between

gasps that she thought a poor white woman down in the creek bottom might know something about Rex the night before.

Cahaba understood instantly, for the dog's trouble was known to all the household, and she exclaimed at once: "I knows whar dat woman lives, — let me go 'head an' git her, an' we'll meet yer, — you ain' got no bref!"

This was indeed true, and the girl slackened her pace as the fresh feet flew on for her. Never did the rusty heels make better time, while things were further expedited by the fact that the woman was just coming from her door, hat and shawl on, to consult a doctor in the town about her child who was very sick.

Cahaba told her, as graphically as Anne could, about Rex's trouble, and the woman exclaimed, "He nevur killed no sheep! He was with me all night last night!"

And Cahaba fairly shouted it when they came up with Anne.

Then the three sped over the ground like the wind, plunging across the then shallow stream to shorten the way to town and reaching the courtroom at last, excited, spent and breathless, just at the moment when things were looking very dark for Donald and his beloved dog.

Anne had never been in a courtroom before, but without a thought of herself or how she looked, red, disheveled, wet with perspiration and the water of the creek, she hurried, with the corn-field darky and the poor white woman, right up to the judge's desk.

"Please, — this woman knows where Rex was last night!" she panted.

Astonishment held everybody for a moment, but the judge was the first to recover. "Is that so?" he exclaimed heartily. "Sit down then, young lady, and we will have her testify."

By this time Mr. Carter had his arm about his daughter and led her to a seat, while Donald strained forward excitedly to hear what the new, strange witness had to say. Nothing else concerned him at that moment.

As the woman stood there breathing heavily, the dog looked up at her and stirred eagerly with glad recognition.

"What do you know about this matter?" inquired the magistrate with unusual celerity, as soon as she had rested a bit.

"Why, that dog's been to my cabin all night an' ever' night fer more'n a week! My little gal's been powerful sick fer two weeks, an' one night he come to my door an' found me a-settin' up, an' I talked to him, so he stayed till mornin' with me, an' he's been comin' ever' night since, goin' home ever' mornin' 'bout daylight," the woman said in her slow, high-keyed voice, but with the unabashed readiness of her class in the South.

She stopped to catch her breath again.

"Where do you live?" the judge asked next.

"Down in the bottom, back of Mr. Martin's, — not on the road, but on the creek bank in the bushes — where folks don't go 'less they has to," she said with simple pathos.

"How do you know the dog did not kill the sheep before or after he was with you?" went on the magistrate. "He had blood on his breast this morning." "Why," said the woman excitedly, while Rex listened to every word she said with eager, alert gaze fixed upon her, and the court became an informal listening group of men, "I can tell you all about that. The dog come to me las' night by half-pas' eight o'clock. My baby was so sick I thought ever' minute she would die, — an' she's blind too, — an' the dog lay down 'cross the doorsill an' never stirred all night long, 'cept now an' then he'd come an' lick my hand." She paused with agitation for a moment.

"I knows 'bout that blood, too, — sure I does. Hit was toward mornin' that he suddenly sat up listenin', then rushed out in front of the cabin, an' the next minute I heard dogs fightin'. I ran to the door an' called him, an' when I called, them dogs hung their tails an' run fer dear

life, all 'cept Rex, an' he come back to my doorstep. I said to him, 'Them dogs is been killin' somebody's sheep, I'll bet,' an' he knowed it too, — that was the reason he went out to lick 'em. An' then's when he got the blood on him, — from off them murderers. I know them rascals, too, they're Mr. Martin's own two dogs," she turned and looked at him fearlessly. "It was bright moonlight an' I saw 'em good. They run on down to the creek pas' my house to wash the blood off themselves, — jes' like sheep-killin' dogs allus do. Rex he stayed right with me till 'way after daylight."

"The prisoner is acquitted," announced the judge with a return to official duty, and shouts went up again and again from the room, while Donald, forgetful of everybody, hugged his dog in rapture.

As for Anne, was she ever happier? And when Donald, later, with shining eyes, wrung her hand, neither of them could say a word.

Mr. Thornton carried her, Cahaba and the woman home, stopping for the woman, Mrs. Pollard, by name, to consult the doctor on the way. Donald said he wanted to walk with Rex, — and who would have denied him that joy just then? Mr. Carter also returned with them, for it was the lunch hour.

When the Carters reached home, of course the whole affair had to be talked over.

May and Gene had come in excited over Anne's disappearance from school, while Mrs. Carter was disturbed because she had not returned home after going for the woman.

At the children's eager questions, Anne

looked blank a moment, and her father inquired:

"Didn't you get permission from the teacher to leave?"

"Why," said the girl slowly, "I never thought about it! When I remembered about the woman and seeing Rex there, I forgot I was at school, — and just went as hard as I could!"

Her father put an affectionate arm about her and laughed, "Well, daughter, I have been afraid you were growing wings lately, you have been such an orderly and altogether charming young lady" (her eyes grew moist with his praise), "but I see you can fall from your high estate," and he laid his hand on her tousled head, and looked down at her wet and muddy shoes.

They all joined in the laugh at her distraught appearance to which. in the ex-

Then Mr. Carter said soberly: "I am proud, daughter, that you showed yourself resourceful in an emergency, and that you could completely forget yourself and your appearance for the sake of others."

Anne's cup of joy was full at that, especially with mother looking the dearest things at her, too,—but she did not forget Cahaba, who had gone on to tell the exciting tale to the kitchen audience.

"Just to think," Anne cried in sudden remembrance, "we would have been too late, after all, if it hadn't been for that blessed Cahaba! She did the running,—Uncle Sam could never have done it, mother,—when I couldn't do it any more,—my breath was gone. And, oh,

how she did fly to get the woman and bring her back! Then, too, she thought of wading the creek, so as to get there quicker, — and we just splashed right in!" she ended, laughing at the recollection of how they must have looked.

And so the talk and the rejoicing went on, till Donald and Rex came along, and then it was all to do over again.

Finally, when the boy had a chance, he said, "That was the finest thing, Anne, a girl ever did, and — and I never can thank you enough."

"Don't try," returned the girl, and with a frank, warm hand-clasp their old friendliness was resumed.

CHAPTER XIII

SECRET MANEUVERS

"I WONDER how that woman's child is!" exclaimed Donald in tardy remembrance as he was leaving.

"Oh," said Anne, remembering also, with wide eyes, "she said it was mighty sick, — but that the doctor gave her some medicine for it and thought it would soon be all right. I'll go and see about it this afternoon though."

"That's the thing!—and I'll go along, too, if you'll let me," taking it for granted in the old way, rather than asking a question "but I must let grand-

mother have a look at this dear old fellow first," he ended, patting Rex for the hundredth time as they raced together down the steps.

Details of the trial were still discussed at lunch, and Anne abruptly exclaimed, as the recollection came to her:

"The woman said her little girl was blind!"

Gene drew in her breath and dropped her hands upon the table, while every one turned instinctively to her.

"Blind!" she faltered at last, and the look upon her sweet face told more than anything ever had, even to her mother, what the word meant to her. She had been so happy in the sightless years, that it hardly seemed she could have comprehended, in any degree of fullness, her affliction, — perhaps she had not until the years of sight since made fuller reve-

lation. A look of rapture then flashed upon her, and she was transformed.

"Our Sanitarium for blind children!"

"Oh, oh," cried one and another, "she can go there and maybe get to see! Won't that be beautiful!"

The girls could hardly be persuaded to finish their lunch, they were so anxious to get that baby to the Sanitarium!

Mr. and Mrs. Carter advised time in their planning and enjoyment of results, till after some investigation.

"Uncle Sam must go ahead and see if there is contagion in the child's illness," said Mrs. Carter, and then there was much to be considered before they could be sure they had such a precious gift as sight for the child, to offer the poor woman to whom they were so grateful; this must certainly not be mentioned till later, lest disappointment follow.

But the caution of grown people could not dampen the ardor of the young Samaritans and they began preparations immediately after lunch in all the glow of assurance.

Donald was there, sharing it with his hearty exclamation, "Won't that be great!"

Such a gathering together of good things as there was, — jelly and preserves, bread and cake, coffee and tea, meat and flour.

"Mother, she looked just like she didn't have anything," urged Anne, "and her house looks like it too, from the outside, — I don't know about the inside, of course."

So, many substantial things were packed, and Margaret Larson came

"Oh, Anne, where did you go to and leave us all so anxious and frightened this morning?"

Of course she had to be told, but this they did on the way, taking her with them.

They trooped off at last, Uncle Sam leading, for he was to go first and find out all he could about the child's sickness while they waited at a little distance for his report; the girls followed with Donald and Rex.

They passed Cahaba on the way through the rear yard, and she looked after them so longingly that Anne, remembering her service, called, "Come on, Cahaba," and the little corn-field darky was in the seventh heaven! On they went through the woods, past old King and Queen in their quiet sleep, past the place where Anne, Cahaba and the woman had waded the creek.

"My word! You must have gotten jolly well wet!" exclaimed Donald.

Anne laughed: "Oh, but I was so hot with running that I was dry in no time,
— all except my shoes."

"You're game all right," he declared.

And then they were waiting breathlessly for Uncle Sam to come back and report, and it was not long till he was hurrying up the hill to them.

"In my 'pinion de ain' much de matter wid dat chile 'cep'in' hit don' git nothin' ter eat," he announced in response to their eager inquiries.

"She say hit can' sleep, but how hit gwine ter sleep wid nothin' in its lil' stummick?"

"Oh, — oh, — oh," cried the girls, "isn't it good we brought the flour and meat and things!"

"Yas," agreed Uncle Sam, "but yer gotter be keerful,—I kin see she's mighty proud. Yer Ma allers gives things to folks lack dey wuz doin' her de favor," he ended cautiously.

"We'll do it nice, Uncle Sam, — you see if we don't," laughed Anne, as she led the troop down to the little log cabin.

Did they ever dream of such poverty, such dire need of everything to make life bearable? The woman did not know what comfort was, to say nothing of luxury, or her pride would never have let the callers in, but they were tactful and gentle in their kindness, — and the full pathos of it all was before them, while the cabin room, for her, blossomed

into strange, incomprehensible life and charm.

The little girl, Lona Pollard, — such a pretty name they thought, — about three years old, lay white and still upon a rude bed, the skin drawn over her emaciated body, and the woman told their story:

How they had come there from the mountains in the fall and how her husband had died a few weeks after they came. How she "didn't know anybody and couldn't get no word to her people," for she "didn't know nothin' 'bout that writin' letters what folks do," and so she had earned what she could washing,—for Mr. Martin's folks mostly, till the child got sick. She "never had took nothin' from nobody," but she couldn't see the baby die, so she would take the things they had brought and she would

work the pay out afterwards, she said with pathetic pride.

As to the child's blindness, she said hopelessly that "lots er mounting chillun is blind."

The poor woman, almost as thin as the child, looked as though she needed rescuing herself, and upon this first acquaintance with real poverty the children could hardly restrain themselves. They wanted to take the woman and her baby home with them, and, but for the restraints already put upon them, there is no telling what might have been attempted. As it was, they left her reluctantly at last, although abundantly supplied with everything to meet immediate needs.

Youth and its exuberance in pursuit of good deeds, — and the millennium would soon dawn!

Warm-hearted Anne lingered, as the rest walked away, to talk a bit more, and pat the child, as the mother held it in her arms at the door to see them off.

The little girls, May and Gene, went on ahead with Uncle Sam, while Donald and Margaret walked slowly together.

"Anne is a fine girl," said Donald warmly, and knowing this to be an agreeable topic with Margaret.

"She is!" responded that ardent friend, "and oh, Donald, do you know her birthday comes two weeks from Saturday! Some of us girls are thinking of doing something awfully nice for her, —don't you think it will be lovely?"

Margaret was always in a glow about something "nice!"

"Fine," agreed Donald. "But what?" with the directness of his sex.

"Why, a party, — a surprise party, —

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Anne turned away from the woman and child at last and walked rapidly to catch up with her friends. As she drew near, she noticed that Margaret and Donald lingered and seemed to be talking very earnestly about something, and passing Cahaba, she was conscious of a pair of dusky eyes with the white pupils bared impressively.

But she could not bother with all Cahaba's moods, so she brushed past her, and was just behind Donald and Margaret when they seemed to be hurrying to finish something they were saying, while it must be very secret, for the two heads were bent close together, and they were talking very low. As she reached them, they stopped, and both looked rather guilty!

There was awkward silence a moment, and then Donald suddenly exclaimed, "Uncle Sam may be right about that child, and it may need only something to eat, but it looks almost dead to me. I am going to get a doctor and take him back there as soon as I can."

"That is just the thing, Donald, — I am so glad you are going to do it! The woman told me he had not seen the baby at all, — she had nothing to pay a doctor with," and they all hurried on, delighted that there was fresh opportunity for service, while the vague, hurt feeling Anne had, over Donald and Margaret's secret, passed completely, but was renewed again when he said:

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"You will be going home, will you not, Margaret? — I will walk up town with you," and Anne caught a meaning look passed from him to her.

Margaret seemed a bit surprised at first, — for she had not meant to go at once, but then, quickly agreed with, "Yes, I am going."

This was unusual, to say the least, and Anne suddenly found herself constrained.

Noticing it, Donald inwardly rebuked himself for his clumsiness, and chatted brightly to both girls the rest of the way; then the two bade her gay good-by and started off together up the street, falling at once into eager conversation.

Anne stood on the front porch looking after them.

"Oh, — oh, — oh, —" she said under her breath, "what is the matter?" All the brightness of the April day went out of the sky.

Then she turned slowly, and walked toward the Blossom Shop, — her refuge always in sorrow or distress.

But she was not destined to find solace there. Cahaba waylaid her.

"Miss Anne," the little darky said earnestly, "them two wuz jes' a-talkin' bout you, — I heerd 'em, but dey seed I wuz tryin' ter listen an' den dey got outer my way. Dat Miss Mag'rit thinks she so putty wid dem red curls of hern, — I jes' hates her like pizen, I does!" And she twisted herself about in imitation of Margaret's pretty ways with infinite scorn.

Anne had stopped short, taking it all in with eager interest at first, — then at the darky's angry resentment toward Margaret, — which was the full flower of an indefinable feeling that was awakening in her own heart, — she turned stormily upon the tempter.

"You hush this minute, Cahaba! She is pretty, the very prettiest and sweetest girl I ever saw, and I love her!" whirling away with a sob, which the astonished Cahaba did not catch.

"N'em min'," Cahaba muttered scornfully, "I knows, and I'se goin' to hate bof' of 'em!"

There was a small tempest in the young girl's heart in spite of her brave repulse of evil suggestion, but at last she fought it out, and went to the house with thoughts like these: "Of course I want them to like one another, both my friends, — only, — if they just wouldn't have secrets and leave me out!"

Then she remembered about the bridges and the little brook in March,

and rising with determination, she declared to herself at last, "I'm not going to have any bridges swept away, I'm going on just like I always have, whatever they do."

And there never was a braver, better resolution, — but it was one very hard to keep during the next two weeks.

CHAPTER XIV

CAHABA THE TEMPTRESS

IF ever a flock of good fairies danced attendance upon human need, it certainly was when the young folks of the Blossom Shop looked after that "poor white woman" and her blind child, and under this assiduous care, together with that of a good doctor, the two began to thrive marvelously. The pallor went from the cheeks of both, the little girl grew plump and active, and the doctor thought there was a possibility that she might be made to see.

"We are so happy, — just to think we

found a blind child ourselves!" wrote little Gene joyfully to Dr. Murton and her Aunt Martha. "Of course, I don't mean we are glad she is blind, but as she is, we are so glad we found her, and that, maybe, the very first one to go to our Sanitarium when it is finished, will be a dear little girl from right here! And to think," she went on enthusiastically, "if it hadn't been for Anne, we never would have found her."

Then she had to tell about Rex and how fine Anne was to think and do what she did. It was a long letter for the little girl to write, but she worked at it industriously till the whole tale was told.

The doctor wrote back with speed: "Send the child on! I have always had faith in that new Shop of yours, — I have believed it was going to market deeds of fragrance and sunshine for the

world, just like the old one, — and here you are, all at it!

"'The Grey Sanitarium for Blind Children' will be open the last of May, — just in time for you to decorate it with your beautiful cape-jessamines, and the first name enrolled shall be your little Lona Pollard."

No wonder they fluttered back and forth along the creek bank in constant ministration to their protégés, and the woman, Mrs. Pollard, as they had come to call her properly, heard about the possibility of help for her child and was willing to accept all that was offered her, for she was assured that she would be given some work at the Sanitarium, or near by, so that she could earn her way and be with the child.

All were happy in these ministrations except Anne. There was a troubled feel-

ing brooding in her heart all the time. Not only did Donald and Margaret seem to have a secret, but a number of her girl friends at school, when talking together in groups, would suddenly stop, as she came near. Little things to trouble one, perhaps, but when one is young, little things mean much.

Mrs. Carter, looking on, in full possession of the secret, for she had been consulted by Margaret and Donald and was partaking of their plans, said to her husband:

"I am almost tempted to turn traitor and give Anne a hint. I know she is troubled at heart over all this secrecy, though she is bravely fighting it, — and I can hardly bear to see her."

Mr. Carter laughed, "I wouldn't, though, for while it may be a bit hard for her, it is good for a girl to find that

little jealousies are usually based on nothing, — and I don't know of anything more contemptible than a jealous woman! She must learn to go her own way happily and bravely, — even if she does not always understand other people's movements, — and to do it without suspicion!"

That was very logical and true, but nevertheless Mrs. Carter shook her head ruefully, and finally proposed that the girl have a pretty new gown for a birthday surprise, in addition to the party.

"Very well," agreed Mr. Carter heartily, "get her the prettiest thing you can find, — but don't tell her, — don't relieve her mind, — we must all learn to endure hardness like good soldiers if we are going to be of service anywhere, you know."

Mrs. Carter smiled back at him then

with her old plea, "Oh, growing up is so hard!" and she was very tender with Anne. This almost made the girl open her heart to her mother, but she was trying so hard to be brave, and she finally kept her trouble to herself.

Time went on apace and the preparations progressed with great zest as well as secrecy. It was to be the prettiest party the little town had ever known, — for everybody loved Anne Carter! It was to be a costume party, and all the girls' costumes were to be of tissue paper in the lovely delicate shades, and there were to be little cambric masks!

The children were to know nothing about it, — including Cahaba, of course. Only Mr. and Mrs. Carter and their helpers, so that they could have the Blossom Shop ready, for there was where it was to be, — while Anne, May and Gene

were to spend the day of the great event with their grandmother in the country, returning home after nightfall. Donald was to come after they were gone to the country and put up the Chinese lanterns.

It required a great deal of talking and planning from the leaders, Donald and Margaret, and while they were more discreet than at first, Anne was well aware that there was much secrecy between them. Time passed on till the day before the birthday. It was Friday, and when she came in from school, she found that Mammy Sue had been busy with Uncle Sam all day. He was suffering terribly with his rheumatism.

"Oh, mother," the girl exclaimed, "let me take baby out. You are busy, and I will be so careful of him! You know I love him with all my heart, he is so *precious*, — and he is getting so big

now, and I am getting so old, — fifteen to-morrow, — I know you can trust me."

Mrs. Carter had not allowed the girls to take him out as yet, partly because he was so tiny and she felt safer to have him with Mammy Sue, and partly because Mammy Sue could not bear to have him away from her care. But the old nurse was not at hand, the day was beautiful and she would be glad to have baby go.

"Very well, Anne, take him, but don't go far," and she forbore to caution her more.

"I won't go on the street at all, mother," replied the girl.

She started off prouder and happier than she had been for days, with the baby all tucked in his carriage, a dainty white cover with blue ribbons from which his dear little face peeped out with smiles and coos above eager, flying fists.

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"Oh, you darling, don't I love you, my own little brother," she cried, and stooped to caress him as they went past the house to the back yard.

Just then Cahaba came up.

She listened to the endearments, then said:

- "Some folks don' call him yore brother."
- "Don't call him my brother," Anne reiterated in astonished indignation. "I'd like to hear anybody say such a thing!" she ended threateningly.
- "Dey says he's des a ha'f," said the little scamp, and then growing bolder, she went on: "Dat Miss Marg'it Larson, she stop and look at him one day, an' she say he des yore ha'f brudder, an' she spec' dat ha'f is des his foots!"

"You go 'way from here, Cahaba," cried Anne, pushing her aside. "You

just made that up yourself, — you know you did!"

But Cahaba called emphatically, "No, m'am, I nuver! Cross my heart an' hope I may die ef she didn't!"

Anne's good sense pleaded that Margaret would hardly say such a thing, while it was just like Cahaba (who had said she hated Margaret "like pizen") to make it up, but nevertheless it rankled sorely just then.

CHAPTER XV

A CRUCIAL MOMENT FOR ANNE

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m URNING}$ from the tempter again, Anne went with all speed through the yard and the garden, out by a little gate to the strip of woodland back of the place, - while calamity prepared to swoop down upon her and her little charge, - but calamity is often not so dreadful as she seems.

The ground sloped gradually down the long wooded incline to the little creek below, - a little creek usually, as has been seen, but there had been heavy

Anne hurried along the upper ridge, her eyes blazing and her heart throbbing. Baby not her own brother? He was, he was! But down in her innermost consciousness had been awakened the fact that he was, after all, only her half-brother, as Cahaba said Margaret said. She had never thought of that before. The composite family was such a unit in every respect, and they had known and loved each other so long, that the sense of a combination of varying elements had been altogether lacking with the children.

A wave of rebellion against facts surged over her, which was quickly followed by one of unbounded love, when she stopped a moment and looked down into the dear little face, with the tiny fists still, and pink lids drooping a bit now in the warm spring wind, which raced and hurtled lustily at times that fateful day.

"You dearest darling, I don't care who says you are not my own brother, — I know you are, every bit of you," and, reaching for the strap which held him in snugly, she quickly unfastened it and lifted him to her breast.

Oh, the feel of the dear, clinging, sleepy little bundle! Tears glistened in her eyes as she hugged him, and her heart was comforted.

Putting him back in his nest, he roused a bit, the blue eyes opened and the little fists went flying again.

She tucked him in with the white afghan, then stood looking down, smiling and cooing with him, — forgetting all "You dearest, I wish I could find you a four-leaf clover, and bring you all the best things in the world! I know I can't out here, but maybe I can find you a heartleaf." Then, as his eyes drooped again, she added softly, "I'll find one and lay it on your pillow to smell sweet while you sleep, precious."

Softly she tripped away to hunt for a new, fragrant heartleaf, hidden among the dead leaves of last year.

But she did not easily find one, as it happened, and knowing baby was safe in dreamland, she wandered on, — a little further than she meant to go, — stooping and poking the leaves at every old tree trunk, where heartleaves were apt to hide.

Ah, there was one at last, a beautiful,

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fragrant heartleaf! She plucked it quickly, took in its spicy fragrance, and then turned leisurely to go back.

As she did so, her eyes lifted, — and where was the baby carriage?

Hurrying back with quick fear at her heart, her eyes swept the whole woodland before her, and then, — "Oh, Mercy!"

Mercy indeed, — for there was the carriage tilted against a little sapling hanging over the very edge of the surging creek!

Simply flying across the intervening space, she reached the sapling and jerked the carriage back.

The baby was not in it!

The horror of that moment need not be told.

The carriage had been tilted toward the creek as it hung against the sapling, — the strap was hanging loose, — as she had left it!

Wild with terror, her first impulse was to plunge in after him. She touched a Gethsemane of prayer and suffering the next moment, — and then her young soul burst into flower. Her mind suddenly cleared in a region of space and strange clarity she had never known before, a place that was God, and where prayer was fulfillment. The impulse to plunge in after the baby passed, — the water was too deep and swift, - she could not rescue him alone. Somebody taller, stronger, if in time, would be able to reach him safely. She did not think it all out, but saw it in a flash of the mind, and then went to the house in a flight that was rather of spirit than of body, so incredibly swift it was.

Fortunately her father was going up

the front steps as she burst upon them, her mother waiting to meet him.

"Mother, father,—the baby,—the baby—in the creek!"

One look into the girl's face and there was no need to question the truth of her statement.

Swifter than her race had been, the father made his way, crying back to her, "Where?" and the girl was not far behind him as she gasped, "the carriage—;" while, white and tense, the mother followed fast,—so fast that she soon almost outstripped them both.

In sight of the carriage by the stream, Mr. Carter was throwing off his coat and vest, and when the other two reached the bank, he had plunged into the swift, surging water, diving and looking, feeling desperately in every direction.

Not a sound came from the white lips

of either Mrs. Carter or the girl, — and neither noticed Donald, with Rex, swinging along the creek bank, — thinking to slip in the back way at the Carters' and have a private word with Mrs. Carter over some plans for the morrow.

"What is it?" he cried as he hurried up, having quickly seen that something was wrong.

Anne turned beseeching eyes upon him as her stiff lips uttered the one word "Baby," and then pointed to the creek.

He was throwing off his coat the next instant to join Mr. Carter, — but the mother put her hand upon his arm, and said hopelessly, — "You may be needed more some other way." So he stood, tense and silent, with the other two.

As for Rex, he went up to the little carriage, and, with one foot lifted, peered over into it, sniffing quietly; then he

went with nose to the ground up the long, wooded incline. At the top he gave a loud, glad bark, and went racing back.

Donald had turned sharply at his bark and looked up the hill, then, with a shout, he sped up it like the wind, and stooping at the little bed of leaves, to which Rex had raced back again, he held aloft,—the sleeping baby!

Such a shout that was! It brought Anne and Mrs. Carter like the fleetest of birds; it halted Mr. Carter in his search, and, looking up, his glad eyes caught sight of the white bundle.

Such rejoicing, such tears, such gratitude to God, — and to Rex and Donald who had cut short the agony, which must have killed them, they felt, had it lasted longer, — all this could never be adequately told, and when Anne walked back along the wooded ridge, with such gratitude to God in her heart as no girl in all the world had ever felt, the old heedlessness was gone forever. And a bit of her youth, at life's demand, — but great was the compensation.

Donald walked away, feeling that it was no time for the presence of an outsider, and as he went he stroked the head of Rex with a fond:

"You pay your debts, old fellow, don't you?" and tears of tender gladness glistened in his young eyes.

When Mr. Carter could quietly look over the ground and talk about it, it seemed practically certain that a gust of wind had started the carriage downward, and that it had tilted against a stump in its path, turning the baby gently out into the soft bed of leaves which filled a depression just there, where he had settled

quietly into comfort once more, continuing his nap, while the carriage went, empty, on its way down to the edge of the creek, to be halted at last just on the brim by the young sapling.

No one ever mentioned the loosened strap to Anne, — and indeed, if the mishap was to occur, it was fortunate that the strap was loose, or the baby's weight might have plunged all in, had he made the whole trip with the carriage. But the girl never forgot an item of her heedlessness so long as she lived.

Cahaba way-laid Anne that night, hanging on to her skirt as she left the dining-room after supper, and pulling her out to the darkness of the back porch, for darkness was most in harmony with the little culprit's abjectly remorseful spirit.

"Lawsy, lawsy, Miss Anne, de debbil

gwine git me sure fer dat lie," she wailed. "Miss Marg'it nuver said nuthin' 'bout de baby bein' jes' a ha'f," and weeping choked the sinner.

"I know," said Anne, with tears, too,
— there could be no transgressor now
without her sympathy.

"No'm, yer don'," protested the sobbing Cahaba. "Hit was me lyin', an' God ain' nuver gwine le' me wear no gol'en slippers —"

"Yes, He will," put in Anne quickly, and to stop the flood of weeping she added eagerly, "I know He will, for Aunt Martha said she is going to send you to school next year, and you will learn better."

The wails stopped instantly.

- "Miss Anne, she nuver!"
- "Yes, but she did," declared Anne, and when Aunt Martha says she will

do a thing, she always does it," she ended impressively.

"Miss Anne, nobody will ever ketch me lyin' no more," Cahaba declared humbly, and nobody did.

CHAPTER XVI

JOYFUL HAPPENINGS

IT was well for Anne that a quiet time in the country at her grandmother's was planned for the next day; nothing could have fitted better into her mental and physical needs. Mr. Carter decided to take a day's rest himself, and drove out with the girls, so there was opportunity for the dearest talk between Anne and her father.

There were no upbraidings for yesterday, simply a talk about the beautiful things, the stern things, the fine things of life that brought the girl into a fuller Altogether it was a quiet, lovely day for the three girls and their father, with grandmother's good things to eat and her joy in their coming, a birthday cake for Anne, and so many little candles that the cake would hardly hold them. After early supper there, the going home was taken in a most leisurely way, — to the mild surprise of the girls, who did not in the least object, however, so it was almost dark when they turned into the driveway at home.

They ran in at once to kiss mother and the baby, with much to tell of their day, but Mrs. Carter said brightly, "Go and take your hats off first," and they scampered promptly to their rooms.

Joyful, amazed "Ohs," came at once from Anne's room, and her mother, tiptoeing after, saw her delight over the lovely new gown of sheer white spread upon her bed. She put an arm about Anne and the girl turned and hugged her rapturously.

"I don't deserve it, mother," with a quick sob, was all she could say.

"Indeed you do," said Mrs. Carter warmly, and then gaily, "Hurry up now and put it right on, for your father has not seen it yet. Fix your very prettiest, dear," she laughed, as she left, while Anne called back gleefully:

"I will!"

Then Mrs. Carter slipped into May and Gene's rooms and told them the "secret," so they, too, began dressing in happy flutter.

After a bit Mrs. Carter called at Anne's door again to see if she was needed for any little final touch, and then

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said, "Come down to your father when you have given it the last look."

It was only a moment later when the girl tripped down the long stairway, feeling so grown-up in the longest dress she had ever worn,—and it was, oh, so beautiful!

At the foot of the stairs was father, looking up at her, with proud eyes,—and she was as fair a blossom as the mother could ask,—or the father might wish to look upon, her face expressive of new unfoldings within, her toilet made with exquisite grace and care, her gown tasteful and beautiful, indeed.

He kissed her tenderly, — and then smilingly held up the forfeited locket with the two youthful faces, and clasped the chain about her neck.

"Oh, father!" she cried with flutter-

ing breath, and her brimming eyes told the rest.

The next moment Donald stepped from the parlor door, all in evening toggery, his fine face frankly admiring, and with a bow he offered his arm, "May I have the pleasure of escorting you out to meet some friends?"

Her moist eyes instantly wide with wonder, Anne could not have told whether she accepted his offer in words or no, but as though in a dream she let him draw her hand within his arm, and stepped with him upon the porch.

Was there ever anything prettier? The magnolias and japonicas, trees and hedges, were abloom with soft colored lights from Chinese and Japanese lanterns, the walk from the house to the Blossom Shop was a long rainbow of gleaming color, and she was moving

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slowly along it, the happiest girl in the world!

The Blossom Shop yard was lit in similar manner, while the shop itself was a fairy bower with the Marechal Niel roses scattering their bloom and fragrance over veranda and roof. Everything was very still as they crossed the orchard and approached the door, only Donald talking gaily about birthdays and surprises, — Anne already with too much of that commodity to fully understand what he was saying.

They entered the shop, and there in a flower-draped corner stood father and mother, — it was so astonishing how people could be first in one place and then the next instant in another, was a flitting thought, — and she was standing beside them, with May and Gene, like two small fairies, holding back at either side a

bunch of bright ribbons which dropped from the ceiling above in a gay, fluttering canopy. Then, — a flock of rustling girls, in soft tissue paper, like manycolored poppies, sprung into life, with boys galore in grey and brass-buttoned full dress, suddenly filled the room, and were coming up in pairs to congratulate her. And no one knew any one else, except the receiving party, for all the young folks had on little cambric masks, with only eyes and mouth peeping out, the girls had exchanged jewelry and powdered their hair, while the boys, if you couldn't see their faces, were just alike anyway in their college uniforms, but they had also powdered their hair to make mystification more certain.

Such a merry, merry, youthful time they had, with music and all the choicest pastimes of the day, and delightful re298

Next morning the birthday was thought to be over, according to timehonored precedent, but this one seemed to be unusual in many ways, and was destined to linger most charmingly.

Another little letter went promptly from Gene to Dr. Murton and Aunt Martha which told about the party and the danger their precious baby had been in. There was not the least hint of blame for Anne in the childish letter, but the doctor and Miss Martha read between the lines, and he exclaimed to her:

"That dear, impulsive, warm-hearted child! She suffered agonies in that sus-

pense, I know. If she wasn't made of sturdy stuff, she'd be having nervous prostration as a result."

His wife looked at him wistfully. His affection for Gene and the Carter girls was apparent always. A great lover of children all his life, they were the first with whom he had ever had close, family contact, and he loved them with the tenderness he would have given his own. But with Anne there was a special tie of sympathy and understanding.

"Suppose we take her to Europe with us on our trip, as our birthday surprise for her," Mrs. Murton said, adding softly, "We need all the youthfulness possible, — and we must beg, borrow or steal it, you know. Besides, I am finding that using money for others is the way to get the greatest joy out of it."

"You are a marvel," the doctor pro-

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The doctor and his wife were making the voyage especially to visit institutions for the blind abroad, to be sure they had the latest methods in their Sanitarium. In talking over the matter of taking Anne with them, the doctor said:

"Mr. Carter will come with her here, of course, — and that will be the opportunity to bring the woman with her blind child, they have discovered, for she could not well travel alone, as little as those mountain 'poor whites' know about anything."

This did seem to fit in most satisfactorily, and so it came about that Anne's fif-

teenth birthday had its crowning celebration a week after the party when her father told her, one glorious May morning, that she was to have a birthday present of a trip abroad with Dr. and Mrs. Murton.

It fairly took the girl's breath away, and there was high joy mingled with quick tears when she thought of leaving those she loved with a big ocean between. And the baby, — she had told her mother in a little talk together a few days before, that she had loved him before that awful day, but since then he had seemed like a part of her very being.

She had indeed passed through a travail of suffering for him, and that a sweet womanhood had dawned within the girl was unmistakable. Soft shadows from the tree of knowledge — of suffering and atonement, of repentance and joy — had crept into the wide greyblue eyes, and a womanly sixth sense had been startled into activity, bringing in the dawn of intuitive forethought, tact and insight, which was to make her life rich in beauty and usefulness.

After the first moment of joy and regret,—the girl remembered past failings, and turned to father and mother in touching appeal:

"Can you trust me? Won't I be doing some dreadfully careless thing? Won't you still be hearing me 'grow up' from clear across the ocean?" with a little quivering laugh...

And they smiled back in loving confidence, "We can trust you."

The date fixed for her leaving was the last of May; the sailing time the first of June.

There was opportunity for the cape-

jessamine packing and shipping before she went, for they were in full bloom, and there was a cape-jessamine gathering and packing party the day before she left. Everybody was helping, for it must be a large shipment in order that the Sanitarium might be decorated with them for the opening, which was just at hand. Mrs. Carter was there, of course, directing it all, the three girls, the baby in his carriage looking on, laughing and cooing, - Mammy Sue not far from him, to be sure, Uncle Sam bustling about, and Cahaba running her rusty heels fairly off with errands here and there. Even Polly hung in her cage and shouted, "All right," "That's so," or laughed aloud as they did. Then in the afternoon a flock of Anne's young friends came trooping in to help, Donald and dear Margaret Larson, just as sweet and lovely as ever, — never having dreamed of all the things she had innocently caused, for Anne had never told her, lest there be some hurt somewhere, and the love between them had only been strengthened by it all; on Anne's part consciously, and on Margaret's in some subtle way she did not understand. The others were school-girl friends and the brass-buttoned boys of the college.

A merry time they had, but they worked with real purpose, too, and so the big shipment of fragrant blossoms went North on the very train with the Carter party.

One morning of that last week, Donald had come rushing in at the Carter front door without ringing.

When Mrs. Carter appeared from the dining-room in surprise at the bounding steps, he cried:

"I beg pardon, Mrs. Carter, — but I'm to go, too, — to old England!"

And the radiant joy in the young face told Mrs. Carter, as nothing ever had, how he loved it, and how brave he had been during all the long months of his uncomplaining stay away.

- "Really!" exclaimed Mrs. Carter, and by this time Anne, May and Gene had run out to hear what that glad, ringing voice was saying.
- "Anne,—" he rushed up to her and grabbed her hands, "I'm going, too,— to old England!"

It had rung in his head till he wanted to shout it to all the world.

- "Oh, Donald!" she exclaimed in return, and danced up and down like a child of six.
- "How did it happen?" Mrs. Carter asked at last.

"A letter, — my father wrote, — came last night, and it said he had to have me with him this summer!" The boy's eyes were fairly scintillating. "Grandfather and mother and I talked the thing over last night, after the letter came, and they were so glad to think that perhaps I might go with your party, — they make such a baby of me, don't you know," he ended apologetically, "think I can't cross the ocean alone," — but adding heartily, "you know, I think it will be great to go with your folks, — if you will let me."

"Of course we will let you," returned Mrs. Carter with equal heartiness, while Anne did not need to speak, — he knew she was glad.

And then the chatter they had over plans, and Donald was "so English," Anne laughingly told him.

"Fine!" he said, "Fine! And, don't

you know, when you see that dearest spot of emerald on earth, you will just grow English, too, like I do when I think of it. You shall see my home—" and something wet gleamed in his eyes while his voice dropped as he added, "and my mother's home all her life long,—and her portrait hanging in the library—I can hardly wait," he ended with something very like a sob, and there were moist eyes with them all, for the little group still stood about him.

Rex was going, too; there could be no such thing as leaving him behind!

And it all came to pass as planned; Mr. Carter conducted the little party, consisting of Mrs. Pollard and her little blind Lona, Anne and Donald; they were all present at the opening of the Sanitarium, Lona being enrolled as the first beneficiary, — and the whole place

was fragrant with cape-jessamines from the Southern Blossom Shop, while everything had been put in satisfactory condition by the doctor for the trip abroad.

The first of June they were sailing out of New York harbor, Anne and Donald looking over the rail at the swelling waves beneath them and the receding shore, full of the joy of the present, and that opening before them, and with the mist of unconscious youth about them never dreaming of another vessel that would be sailing off on the sea of life some day in which they had taken passage together, — but that was to be years afterward, — and, never mind about that now!

THE END.



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No field of fiction is more interesting than that of a detective, or professional investigator of mysteries, and it is easy to predict a popular welcome for this clever story of Mr. Weir's. The reader will be absorbed in following the clues which guided Madelyn Mack, the unique woman detective, in the solution of the strange mystery of "The Purple Thumb." And this is only one of her remarkable cases in a continuous series of adventures which constitute a tale of swift and dramatic action. Clever in plot and effective in style, the author has seized on some of the most sensational features of modern life, and the result is a detective novel that gets away from the beaten track of mystery stories in the first page and never returns to it.

PLANTATION STORIES OF OLD LOUISIANA

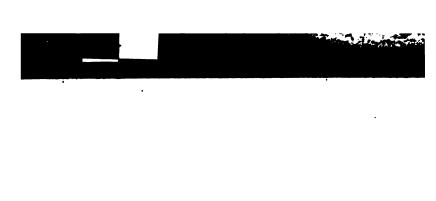


By Andrews Wilkinson



12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated by Charles Livingston Bull
Net \$2.00; carriage paid \$2.20

Primarily, these nature and animal stories are for the children's hour, but their underlying philosophy and humor will charm every member of the household from the smallest toddler to the old folks. In Old Jason, the author has created a character who will rival the justly famed Uncle Remus. The old fellow's legends, related in the quaint negro dialect of the South of years ago, are remarkable examples of a vanishing folk lore and are certain to entertain even the most blasé reader. Nor has the author been satisfied with having created only that delightful character. He has included in his volume stories of birds and animals which will take rank with Kipling's Jungle Books; he has given us stories in the hitherto little known Creole dialect, and through them all he has maintained an attractive interest which grasps the reader at the very outset and holds him until the last page has been read.



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